The Story of the Bible

James Baikie

NOV 30 19

LIBRARY OF
EVANGELICAL SCHOOL
OF THEOLOGY

No. 7033

DONOR Dr. C. H. Wintsch

THE BIBLE STORY

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

PEEPS AT ANCIENT ROME
PEEPS AT ANCIENT EGYPT
THE SEA KINGS OF CRETE
PEEPS AT ANCIENT GREECE
PEEPS AT ANCIENT ASSYRIA
THE STORY OF THE PHARAOHS
LANDS AND PEOPLES OF THE BIBLE
THE RESURRECTION OF THE ANCIENT EAST

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025

https://archive.org/details/biblestory0000revj

JESUS AND THE WOMAN OF SAMARIA.

THE BIBLE STORY

A CONNECTED NARRATIVE RETOLD FROM HOLY SCRIPTURE

BY

REV. JAMES BAIKIE, F. R. A. S.

AUTHOR OF "THE STORY OF THE PHARAOHS," "THE SEA KINGS OF CRETE," "LANDS AND PEOPLE OF THE BIBLE," ETC.

LIBRARY OF
Carl Herman Wintsch, M.D.
No. Cost.

New York
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
1929

All rights reserved

LIBRARY OF
United Theological Semin
BS
550
B254
1929
32,867

7033

EVANGELICAL
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

COPYRIGHT, 1923,
BY THE MACMILLAN COMPANY.

Set up and electrotyped. Published September, 1923.
Reprinted, November, 1926.
Reprinted, July, 1927.
Reprinted, October, 1928
Reprinted May, 1929.

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

TO
MY GOOD FRIENDS
IN THREE CHURCHES
ANCRUM, WARDIE & TORPHICHEN
WITH DEEP THANKFULNESS
FOR THEIR FRIENDSHIP

UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
NOV 30 1954

PREFACE

F all books in the World's literature, the Bible remains infinitely the greatest and most abidingly interesting. No other book has ever had anything to compare with its circulation; none has appealed to so wide a range of peoples, or touched human sympathies at so many points. The passing of the centuries seems to make no change upon its appeal to the human heart; and the work of the Biblical critic, and the labour of the excavator, while they may have altered to some extent our perspective or our point of view, have only given an added vividness to its pictures, and made it more of a living book to this generation than it has ever been in the past.

Viewed merely from the standpoint of what constitutes a fascinating and enthralling narrative, no book can pretend to rival it; and the stories of Joseph and his brethren, of Moses and the Wanderings of Israel, of Joshua, of Samson, and the other Judges, of Jonathan and David, remain unmatched for freshness and charm. Above all, the story of the Birth, the Life, and the Death of Jesus Christ is full of unrivalled beauty and power, apart altogether from its spiritual significance.

In this book, the attempt is made to use all this wealth of narrative in the interests of those for whom its charm is somewhat marred at times by the necessity of disentangling the story from a mass of circumstantial detail, which however interesting it may be to the scholar, is apt to be an embarrassment or a weariness to one who simply seeks to know what happened, and how. The story is told from stage to stage in the order in which its events actually occurred, so that the reader may follow it with uninterrupted attention, and be spared alike the trouble of disentangling the incidents from the somewhat bewildering setting in which they are embedded, and the toil of piecing out the partial narrative of one book with the equally partial narrative of another.

PREFACE

One of the enduring charms of the Bible story in its English dress is the matchless dignity and grace of the language in which it is told in our Authorised Version. To anything like this no other narrative can pretend; but an effort has been made to maintain a form of language which, while avoiding what is archaic and unintelligible, shall yet avoid also what is unduly familiar and modern, and preserve something of the savour of more ancient times and more stately manners.

A section, not strictly Biblical, has been added, in which the course of history between the closing of the Old Testament Story, and the beginning of that of the New is briefly traced; and this, it is believed, may prove useful to some for whom this period has hitherto been simply a blank.

The vividly imagined, and carefully studied colour plates of Mr. J. H. Hartley, who recently made a special journey to the East for the purposes of this book, will, it is hoped, help many readers to a truer conception of the incidents with which they deal.

So the book is sent out, with a full consciousness of its imperfections, not with the vain idea that it may in any sense be a substitute for the wonderful volume from which its narrative is drawn, but with the hope and prayer that it may lead some readers to a new and more intelligent appreciation of the infinite treasure of interest and wisdom which is stored in the Bible, and send them back to the Word of God with a quickened sense of its unsearchable riches.

J. Baikie.

EVANGELICAL
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

CONTENTS

BOOK ONE

The Old Testament

PART I. STORIES OF THE WORLD'S CHILDHOOD — PAGE

(1) In the Beginning 3
(2) Paradise, and How it Was Lost 5
(3) The Coming of Death 7
(4) The Flood and the Ark 10
(5) The First City 14

PART II. STORIES OF THE DAWN OF HISTORY

(1) A Pilgrim Household 17
(2) The Father of the Faithful 19
(3) A Worldly Choice 21
(4) "As the Stars of Heaven" 24
(5) The Day of the Lord 26
(6) The Child of the Promise 29
(7) A Lesson about God's Heart 30
(8) Courtship and Marriage in the Olden Time 32
(9) The Cheat Who Became a Prince: The Deception 35
The Wandering 40
The Return ... 44
(10) Joseph and His Brethren: The Dreamer 48
The Slave 51
The Viceroy 56

PART III. STORIES OF THE MAKING OF A NATION

(1) In the House of Bondage 64
(2) The Coming of the Deliverer 66
(3) A False Start, and a Vision of God 67
(4) Pharaoh and His Slaves 69

CONTENTS

PAGE

(5) The Great Deliverance 76
(6) A Pilgrim Nation 79
(7) At the Mount of God 83
(8) The Vision of God's Dwelling-Place 86
(9) The Golden Calf 90
(10) The Scapegoat 95
(11) Murmurings and Misfortunes 97
(12) The Aimless Years 103
(13) A Wise Fool from the East 109
(14) A Death in the Desert 115

PART IV. STORIES OF ISRAEL'S IRON AGE

(1) The Conquest of Canaan: The First Triumph ... 117
The First Check 123
The Tide of Conquest 126
A True Man's Last Testament 131
(2) The Woman Who Saved Israel 134
(3) The Sword of the Lord and of Gideon 140
(4) A Foolish Vow 148
(5) The Champion of Israel 150
(6) Ruth the Moabitess 155
(7) The Child Who Was Given to God 159
(8) The Ark of Jehovah 161

PART V. STORIES OF ISRAEL'S GOLDEN AGE

(1) "Give Us a King" 166
(2) The Promise of Morning 169
(3) The Promise Fails 172
(4) Wager of Battle 174
(5) "Passing the Love of Women" 178
(6) A Captain of Outlaws 180
(7) "How Are the Mighty Fallen!" 184
(8) "Arise, O Lord, into Thy Rest" 188
(9) A Good Man's Sin 191
(10) The Wages of Sin 193

CONTENTS

PAGE

(11) "The Old Order Changeth" 200
(12) "Wisdom is the Principal Thing" 204
(13) "An Habitation for the Mighty God" 206
(14) Wisdom, Splendour, and Pride 209
(15) A Fool and His Folly 212

PART VI. STORIES OF THE DECLINE AND FALL

(a) *The Northern Kingdom*

(1) The Man Who Made Israel Sin 214
(2) Jehovah or Baal? 217
(3) Crime and Punishment 224
(4) The Passing of Elijah 228
(5) Naaman the Syrian 231
(6) "Windows in Heaven" 233
(7) A Savage Reformer 238
(8) The Arrow of the Lord's Deliverance 242
(9) The Kingdom Falls 243

(b) *The Kingdom of Judah*

(1) A Time of Small Things 246
(2) The Boy-King of Judah 249
(3) The Leper King 251
(4) The Challenge of Assyria 254
(5) The Last Gleam 257
(6) The Fall of the House of David 259

PART VII. STORIES OF EXILE

(1) By the Rivers of Babylon 263
(2) Nebuchadnezzar's Dreams 267
(3) The Fiery Furnace 270
(4) Belshazzar's Feast 273
(5) The Den of Lions 275

PART VIII. STORIES OF THE RETURN

(1) Rebuilding the Temple 278
(2) Ezra the Scribe 282
(3) Sword and Trowel 284
(4) How Queen Esther Saved Her People 286

CONTENTS

PART IX. STORIES OF THE POETS AND PROPHETS OF ISRAEL. PAGE

(1) Job, the Story of a Great Problem 293
(2) Jonah: the Parable of God's Mercy 298

PART X. FROM THE OLD TO THE NEW

The Wrestle of Hebrew, Greek, and Roman for God's Land 303

BOOK TWO

The New Testament

PART I. STORIES OF THE BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD OF JESUS

(1) The Message of Gabriel 311
(2) "Peace on Earth, Goodwill towards Men" 314
(3) The Star of Bethlehem 315
(4) "Wist Ye Not That I Must Be in My Father's House?" 319

PART II. STORIES OF THE EARLY WORK OF JESUS

(1) How John Baptised his Saviour 322
(2) How Jesus Was Proved 324
(3) The Young Leader and His Friends 325
(4) A Wedding-Feast 329
(5) A Visit to Jerusalem 331
(6) By the Well of Sychar 334

PART III. STORIES OF THE BRIGHT DAYS IN GALILEE

(1) How the Fame of Jesus Grew 337
(2) How Jesus Was Driven from His Own Home ... 341
(3) At the Pool of Bethesda 343
(4) The Great Teacher 346
(5) The Friend of Sinners 350
(6) The Great Physician 355
(7) An Evil Woman's Vengeance 362
(8) "Bread of the World, and Bread of Life" 364
(9) A Heathen Woman and Her Faith 368
(10) The Glory on the Mount 370

PAGE

(11) Jesus and His Friends 373
(12) Good-by to Galilee 377
(13) The Blind Man and Jesus 381
(14) A Rest before the Battle 383

PART IV. THE STORY OF THE CROSS AND THE RESURRECTION

(1) Jesus and His Dead Friend 386
(2) The Last Journey 389
(3) "Behold, thy King Cometh!" 393
(4) Jesus and His Enemies 395
(5) The Coming of the Greeks 399
(6) Jesus Tells of the Future 400
(7) The Traitor and His Work 403
(8) In the Upper Room 404
(9) A Place Called Gethsemane 407
(10) God's Priests and God's Son 410
(11) How Pontius Pilate Was Tried 412
(12) The Death that Brought Life 416
(13) The First Easter-tide 421
(14) Morning by the Lake-Side 424
(15) How Jesus Went Home 426

PART V. THE STORY OF THE EARLY CHURCH—IN PALESTINE

(1) Waiting for Orders 427
(2) At the Beautiful Gate 429
(3) Progress and Persecution 431
(4) The First Martyr 433
(5) A Baptism in the Desert 435
(6) The Heavenly Vision 437
(7) "To the Gentiles Also" 439
(8) Through the Iron Gate 441

PART VI. THE STORY OF THE EARLY CHURCH—ABROAD

(1) The First Missionaries 444
(2) The First Church Council 446
(3) The Gospel Dawns on Europe 448

PAGE

(4) Athens, the Eye of Greece 451
(5) Corinth, the City of Pleasure 452
(6) Ephesus, the City of the Lady of Life 454
(7) Paul at Jerusalem 456
(8) Before the Judges 461
(9) An Old-Time Voyage and Shipwreck 464
(10) At Cæsar's Judgment-Seat 467

PART VII. THE STORY OF A GREAT VISION
(1) How John Saw His Lord on Patmos 470
(2) How St. John Saw the City of God 471

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

1. Jesus and the Woman of Samaria ..... *Frontispiece*

Facing page

2. Noah's Sacrifice 12
3. Abram and Sarai in Egypt 21
4. Hagar and Ishmael 28
5. Rebekah at the Well 33
6. Meeting of Jacob and Esau 48
7. Joseph Sold into Slavery 53
8. The Finding of Moses 60
9. Moses and Aaron before Pharaoh 65
10. Moses Striking the Rock 80
11. Destruction of the Golden Calf 97
12. Balaam and the Angel of the Lord 112
13. Moses on Mount Pisgah 117
14. The Stoning of Achan 124
15. Deborah and Barak 129
16. Jephthah's Daughter 144
17. Samson at the Mill 149
18. Ruth in the Harvest-Field 156
19. David and Goliath 177
20. David Playing before Saul 181
21. Saul and the Witch of Endor 188
22. News of Battle 192
23. Solomon and the Queen of Sheba 209
24. Naboth's Vineyard 224
25. The Crowning of Joash 257
26. Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar's Dream 272

Facing page

27. Esther and Ahasuerus 293
28. "Curse God, and Die" 300
29. Jonah Cast into the Sea 305
30. The Nativity 309
31. The Coming of the Wise Men 316
32. Jesus among the Doctors 320
33. "Prepare Ye the Way of the Lord" 325
34. "By the Galilean Lake" 332
35. At the Pool of Bethesda 337
36. "A Woman Which Was a Sinner" 352
37. The Prodigal 357
38. The Feeding of the Five Thousand 364
39. "Suffer the Little Children" 373
40. "What Lack I Yet?" 380
41. Blind Bartimæus 385
42. Peter's Denial 400
43. "Art Thou a King Then?" 417
44. Remorse 421
45. The Resurrection Morning 428
46. Philip and the Ethiopian 432
47. "Who Art Thou, Lord?" 437
48. Peter's Deliverance 444
49. Paul and Barnabas at Lystra 449
50. Paul's Shipwreck 464

BOOK ONE
THE OLD TESTAMENT

THE BIBLE STORY

Part I. *Stories of the World's Childhood*

(1) IN THE BEGINNING

IN the beginning God created the heavens over and around us, and this great earth whereon we live. Now the earth was at first shapeless and empty, and over the formless land and the fathomless deep there brooded thick darkness that no light had ever pierced. Then God sent forth His Spirit of Power over the waters, and God said, "Let there be light," and, lo! through the darkness came the first light that ever shone on earth. Then God, glad in the beauty of His work, appointed its time for the light, and its time for the darkness; and He gave them names, calling the light Day, and the darkness Night. And so Morning and Evening, betwixt the dawning of the light and the gathering of the darkness, made the first day earth ever knew; yet not such a day as we know, but one of the days of God, in whose sight a thousand years are but as yesterday when it is past.

Then when the second day dawned, God stretched above the waters of earth the great blue space of the sky, where the rain-clouds come and go; and these spaces He called Heaven. And once more came the dawn, bringing in the third day; and on this day God set their bounds to the wide waters, and drew back their restless waves from the shore, so that the land arose, barren and naked still, but dry; and the land He called Earth, and the water, Sea. Then at God's word the bare earth was covered with a fresh mantle of green grass, dotted with bright flowers and seed-bearing plants, and shaded with fruit-trees; and God's heart was glad once more in all the beauty He had made.

And now God set great lights in the blue vault of heaven, that they might mark the day and the night, and that by them might be reckoned the passing of the days and months, the seasons and the years. One greater light he set in heaven to shine upon the earth by day, and one lesser light to brighten the darkness of night; and beyond these, in the great depths of heaven, He set the far-off stars. So the darkness passed, and the east flushed with the first sunrise that ever shone on earth; and when the day waned and the shadows of evening fell, the pale moon rose and passed athwart the sky, telling the hours of night. This was the work of the fourth day.

But on the fifth day God spoke to the waters, and, at His command, they brought forth all the creatures of the deep, great and small, mighty whales, and great fish of all kinds, and all the strange creatures that move in the depths of the ocean. Above the waters of the deep His word sent forth, wheeling and circling in the air, all the squadrons of the sea-birds, gull, and albatross, and osprey, and all their kindred. And God blessed them, great and small, and bade them increase, so that sea and sky might be filled with life. So came and passed the fifth day.

Next it befell that God's word went forth over the dry land, and wherever it passed, in the woods and glens, among the hills, by the river meadows, on the great grass plains, and in the desert sands, life awoke. Cattle grazed upon the plains and on the meadows, mighty beasts roamed through the forests, serpents crawled among the long grass and over the burning sands. And God gave to them all a Master and a Lord; for He said, "Let us make Man in Our Image;" and so out of the earth He made him, dust of dust, yet with God's own spirit within him, that he might govern all living things in the world, and order at his will his heritage of earth. And to all the creatures which He had made, God gave all the fruits of the earth for food; to each its own, according to its nature and its desire. So on this sixth day God's great work was finished; and He looked upon all things that His word had made, and all seemed fair and beautiful to Him. On the seventh day He rested, and blessed that day, and set it apart as an holy day for ever.

(2) PARADISE AND HOW IT WAS LOST

NOW the time was come for the fair earth which God had made to be ordered and arranged. Therefore He planted a garden in the Land of the Plain, looking towards the sunrise. Therein He set all kinds of trees, for beauty and for use, for shade and for food; also the river that ran through the Land of the Plain watered the garden, dividing into four streams that every part of it might be supplied. Above all God placed in His garden two trees. They stood in the midst of the garden, and one was called "The Tree of Life," and the other, "The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil." Into this place of beauty and fruitfulness, God brought the man whom He had made out of the dust, and to whom He had given breath of His own spirit; and He commanded him to watch and tend it. For food He gave him the fruit of all the trees that were in the garden, saving one alone. Of the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, he was forbidden to eat: "For in the day that thou eatest thereof," said God, "then shalt thou surely die."

Then to Adam (for so God named the man whom He had made), God brought all the beasts and living creatures of earth and air, that he might name them; and as they passed before him, walking, creeping, flying, he gave to each the name by which it should be known in days to come. But the man was alone in the midst of all God's creatures, and there was none to mate with him. So God said, "It is not good that he should be alone: I will make a helper and companion for him." Then there fell upon Adam a deep sleep; and while he slept, God took a rib out of the man's side, and therefrom He fashioned a woman, and brought her to the man. And Adam, awakening from his sleep, saw the mate whom God had given him and cried, "Bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh." And he named her "Ishsha," "My Woman," because she had been taken from the very flesh of "Ish," the man.

So they two lived together in God's beautiful Garden of Paradise, and all around them there was peace, and innocence, and happiness, and they had joy and gladness the one of the other, and both in the good gifts of God.

Yet even into God's garden there came an evil thing, and it worked woe to the man and the woman, as you shall hear.

For the serpent was the most wily of all lower creatures which God had made, and the spirit of evil entered into him, and he said to the woman, "Is it true that God has said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?'" And the woman answered, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; only there is one tree in the midst, and God has warned us about it, and said, 'Ye shall not eat of its fruit; ye shall not even touch it, lest ye die.'" Then said the serpent: "God is only deceiving you. Ye shall not die: but God knows that if ye eat of the fruit of this tree ye yourselves shall be like gods, knowing good and evil. Therefore He has forbidden you."

So the woman looked upon the tree; and ever the more she looked, the more her heart desired the forbidden thing. The fruit seemed good, the tree was beautiful, and the thought of knowing things was tempting! At last she put out her hand and took some of the fruit and ate it; then calling her husband she gave him also of the fruit, and he became sharer in her fault. Then, in a moment, too late, they knew. Their hearts were filled with shame because of their nakedness, and they took fig leaves and made girdles about their loins. And with Shame, came Fear also; for when, as evening fell, they heard the voice of the Lord God as He moved in the garden, they hid themselves in terror among the trees. Then the Lord God called to the man, "Where art thou?" And Adam came before God in great dread and answered, "I heard Thy voice in the garden, and, because I was naked, I was afraid; therefore I hid myself." Then said the Lord God: "Who told thee of thy nakedness? Hast thou eaten of the tree that was forbidden thee?" And Adam answered, "The woman whom Thou gavest me as my companion—she gave me the fruit, and I ate it." So God said to the woman, "What is this that thou hast done?" And she replied, "The serpent beguiled me."

Then the Lord God cursed the serpent: "For evermore thou

shalt crawl and creep in the foul dust, and it shall be thy food. Hatred shall be between thee and the woman and all her children; they shall crush thy head, and thou shalt wound their heel." Upon the woman also He laid a burden: "Pain and sorrow shall be thy lot, even through thy dearest, for thy children shall be borne in suffering, and thy husband shall be thy master, even because of thy love to him." Last of all said the Lord God unto Adam, "Because thou didst listen to thy wife, rather than to My command, lo! the ground is cursed before thee henceforth: it shall yield thorns and thistles; only with pain and irksome toil shalt thou win from it thy bread, until at last it claim thee once again: for from the dust I made thee, and to the dust thou shalt return."

So it befell that Paradise was lost to man. God clothed the man and his wife with the skins of beasts, and He drove them forth from the garden, lest, having now the Knowledge of good and evil, like God, they should eat of the Tree of Life, and become eternal also, like God. Sad at heart, Adam and his wife went out into the wilderness from their beautiful first home; and before the eastern gate of the garden God set a guard of angels, and a living sword of flame which whirled north, south, east, and west, that none might pass it to win to the Tree of Life.

But the first man and the first woman lay without in the darkness, and watched the living flame with eyes that were dim with weeping for thought of the joy that their folly had lost, and the toil and sorrow that were to be.

(3) THE COMING OF DEATH

YET even into the sorrow of the man and woman there came the light of joy. For out in the desert a little son was born to them, and they called him "Cain," which is to say "Gotten," because his mother said, "I have gotten a man from God." And when Cain had come, Adam named his wife "Eve," "The Life-Bringer." So there was gladness in the rude desert home, and yet more when another son was born. Him they named Abel; and

after them there came other stout boys and fair girls, till the home was full of their life and merriment, and Adam and Eve, looking upon them, almost forgot their sorrow.

Meanwhile Cain and his younger brother had been growing fast to manhood. Very different they were, both in their natures and in their tastes and callings. For Cain was a mighty man and strong, but dark and gloomy, sullen, and swift to anger; and he loved to drive the plough through the stubborn earth, and to sweep down the ripened corn with the sickle. But Abel was gentle, frank, and open, and his delight was to watch and guide the gentle beasts of the field, and to think his own quiet thoughts as he guarded his sheep and lambs.

Now it befell that at the harvest season Cain brought an offering of the first fruits of his fields and laid it before the Lord God, and Abel also brought his offering of the early lambs of his flock. Both offerings were as God had commanded; but it was otherwise with the heart of one of the givers of the gifts. For God looked into the heart of Cain, and saw it dark with jealousy and anger. Therefore He would have none of a gift that was brought in so churlish a spirit; but Abel's offering he accepted. So the fire of Cain's sullen heart burned hotter than ever, and his face bore a frown so dark that the Lord rebuked him, and warned him that Sin, like a wild beast, lay crouching at the door of his life, ready to destroy him. But Cain took no heed, and went his own dark, lonely way, brooding over his new grievance.

And it was so that one day the two brothers were talking with one another as they walked in the open country; and a sudden passion flamed up in the heart of Cain, so that he struck his brother to the ground and slew him. So came Death for the first time into the world that God had made. And when Cain saw the red blood, and felt the shadow of Death upon him, he was aghast; and he heard the voice of God, saying to him, "Where is Abel thy brother?" Yet he tried to brazen out his crime, and answered, "I know not: am I my brother's keeper?"

Then said the Lord God: "What hast thou done? Thy brother's blood crieth to Me from the ground where thou hast spilt it. Tiller of the soil as thou art, the earth that has sucked up

the blood of Abel shall be barren henceforth to thy tillage, neither shall it yield thee ever a home: for thou shalt be a vagabond and a wanderer till thou die." But Cain answered: "My punishment is greater than I can bear. Thou drivest me from my homeland; Thou drivest me from Thyself. I must wander ever about the world, and the first of my brethren that finds me will slay me for the slaying of Abel." "Nay," said the Lord, "for sevenfold vengeance shall fall on the man that slayeth thee;" and the Lord set a mark upon Cain, that all men might know him, and that none might dare to lift a hand against him.

So the first slayer went out from the presence of God; yet not companionless, for his wife did not forsake him in his doom. And they twain lived in a land called the Land of Wandering, eastwards from the Garden of God; and in process of time there were born to them sons and daughters, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. And the brood of Cain, strong and masterful and cunning, built them towns and found out many inventions. For there were two of the sons of Lamech, the sixth in line from Cain, who were the first to teach the children of men two wondrous crafts that since have ever been both the delight and the sorrow of the world. Jubal strung the first harp that ever made melody on earth, and the first organ that ever breathed music was the work of his hands. But the work of his brother Tubal-cain was a work of mingled strength and sorrow for mankind. For he first forged iron and made the tools that are man's servants; but he made also the first sword!

Now when he brought this new power that his hand had made to his father Lamech, the stern old man held it, and mused awhile; and then calling his wives, Adah and Zillah, Sunshine and Shadow, to him, he shook the blade aloft, and sang the first war song—"The Song of the Sword."

"*Sunshine and Shadow, hear ye my voice;*
Ye wives of Lamech, hearken to my speech;
Now shall I slay the man that woundeth me;
Yea the young man that hurteth me shall be brought low.
If the vengeance for Cain be sevenfold,
Seventy and sevenfold the vengeance of Lamech."

So Death came into the world by the anger of Cain; and, by the cunning of Cain's children, Death's power was multiplied, till the earth became full of slaying and sorrow. But the end of the first unhappy slayer no man knows unto this day.

(4) THE FLOOD AND THE ARK

THROUGH all these haps of his descendants, the man whom God first made still lived on; and when at last, in extreme old age, he laid him down to die, his race had increased exceedingly on earth. Men of mighty stature and fierce passions rose up among them and wrought valiant and cruel deeds upon earth, so that the fame of them spread abroad, and it was fabled that these were sprung from the sons of the gods who had wedded the fair daughters of men. Yet, though wickedness and violence were rife on every hand, God did not forget His children; for He sent them a messenger, Enoch, the seventh in descent from Adam. Enoch was holy and peaceful, loving to meditate and speak with God in the stillness. Yet he had a bold word of anger, too, against the wickedness of his brethren; for he warned them that God was coming with a mighty power to execute judgment upon the wicked. But in the pride of their strength men would not listen to him. And after a while they missed him from their midst, and wondered for a time what had become of him, and then turned to their toil and their sin again. But Enoch was with God, who had taken him away from the evil to come, and his place on earth knew him no more.

Now as the time drew nigh when God would judge and punish the evil deeds of men, He sent forth another messenger to plead with them. To Lamech (not the man who sang the "Song of the Sword", but another of the name), there was born a son; and when the father looked upon his little one, he named him "Noah," "Comforter": "For," said he, "this little child shall comfort us in the midst of all our toil." And so it proved, but not, perhaps, as Lamech imagined; for Noah was destined to save the race of man

from utter destruction in the great judgment that was coming upon the earth.

The years passed on, and Noah grew to manhood, and himself had sons to be his comforters. Shem and Ham and Japheth, they were called; and they grew up and took them wives. In this household alone was there justice and kindness and faithfulness, for Noah was true and upright, and listened ever for the voice of God. Now the Lord grew weary of the evil-doings of the men whom He had made, and He spake to His true servant on this wise: "The time is come to make an end of mankind, for they have filled the world with wickedness; therefore will I destroy them. So, now, behold! I am bringing a flood of waters upon the earth to destroy all men; but with thee and with all thy house, I will make a covenant to save thee. Up, therefore, and make thee an ark, according to the fashion that I shall show thee; that therein thou, and all thy household, and the living creatures of the earth, two of each kind, may be saved from the destroying waters."

Then Noah went up into the mountains with his strong sons; and they hewed down the mighty cedars, and shaped them into beams and planks, and brought down the fragrant wood to the plain to build the great ship concerning which God had given them commandment. And this was the fashion of it. In length, it was four hundred and fifty feet, in breadth, it was seventy-five, and in height, it was forty-five. Three decks it had, with hatchways whereby men, or beasts, might go out or in; and in the uppermost deck which was over all there were windows for light and air. Both without and within the sweet-smelling cedar wood was coated with pitch, to keep the great ship tight against the water.

Year after year the mighty vessel was a-building. The men of the plain, who dwelt beside Noah, came and marvelled at it, as the gaunt ribs rose and were clothed with the planks; and they would mock and jeer at the madman who wasted his own and his sons' time and strength on such a folly. When they jeered and questioned, Noah spoke to them of righteousness, and of God's coming judgment upon iniquity, but none would listen. And still the great ship grew till it was finished; and the birds of the air and the beasts of the field, clean and unclean, were gath-

ered into it by sevens and by twos, and food sufficient for all was stored in its vast chambers. Yet no man hearkened to Noah's warning, even to the end. All things went on as they were wont, buying and selling, eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage.

Then at last God spake once more to His servant. "In seven days will I bring rain upon the earth for forty days and forty nights, and everything that I have made will I destroy from the face of the earth, saving thee and thine alone." So Noah went into his great ship, he, and all his family, and all the living creatures that God had bidden him take with him; and when they were all within, the Lord shut them in. Then came the great storm-clouds, driving up from the horizon, till all the sky was black with their lowering threat. Awhile they hung like doom above the world, and all nature seemed to stand still until the seventh day was over; then the fountains of the great deep were loosed, and the windows of heaven were opened, and for forty days and nights the rain descended and the floods came—such rain and such floods as never man had seen before.

First the muddy waters swept over the great plains, and houses dissolved in the furious waves, and all folk fled in terror to the hills, and the ark rocked and shivered where it lay, till at last it lifted and went drifting over what had been fertile fields and happy homes. Foot by foot the floods crept up the hillsides, and men drew their loved ones and their treasures higher and higher up the slopes, till at length they were forced to seek the great mountains behind. And still the rain lashed upon them from above, and the cold waters swelled from beneath to their very feet. Then they fought for standing room on the mountain summits, and the weaker fell one by one into the tide of death. At last there came a day when the horror-stricken watchers in the drifting ark saw neither man nor beast nor speck of land remaining; but from grey horizon to grey horizon naught but an infinite and weary waste of desolate waters. The judgment of God was accomplished, and of all the race of man there was left but that handful within the ship of deliverance.

So for an hundred and fifty days the ark drifted over a drowned

NOAH'S SACRIFICE.
(Genesis, viii, 20.)

world; and then God had pity on His world and the men and creatures who tossed upon that sea of death. He sent forth a mighty wind out of His treasuries, and as it blew across the deep, the clouds rolled back like a dark curtain, and the vault of heaven appeared blue and clear like a sapphire, with the clear shining after rain. The sun shone out and the great wind blew, and inch by inch the waters drew back from their prey, till at last, on the seventeenth day of the seventh month, the ark touched the peak of Ararat, and remained fast. For forty days the waters ebbed; and then Noah opened a window, and let loose a raven; and the raven went to and fro till the dry land appeared.

Next he loosed a dove, but the gentler creature found no resting-place, and she came fluttering back to her window once more; and Noah stretched forth his hand and drew her into the ark. For another seven days he waited before sending out his little messenger again. And lo! when she came back the second time, she bore in her beak a green olive leaf. At the sight of it, Noah's heart was glad, for he knew that the floods were leaving the hill-slopes where the olive woods grow; yet he waited seven days more, that he might make sure that all was dry. And when he sent forth the dove the third time, she returned no more; so Noah knew that the time had come for him to leave his refuge and go forth to begin the world anew.

So at God's command the great hatchways of the ark were opened, and Noah, and his wife, and all his household, and all the living creatures that he had saved, came forth, and stood once more upon dry ground, with the green hillside beneath their feet. Then, in the thankfulness of his heart, Noah raised an altar where he stood, and thereon he made a sacrifice to the Lord, who had preserved him and his. So when God saw His servant's gratitude, He blessed the man and all that he had. For his sake He took the curse from the ground and pledged Himself that never again would He destroy all living things. "While the earth remaineth," said the Lord, "seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease."

And when Noah lifted his eyes to heaven, he saw, against the dark, retreating clouds, the seven-coloured bow of God flashing

its radiant arch across the earth; and, as he looked on it, God spake to him on this wise: "Behold! I make with you the covenant of the rainbow. I do set My bow in the cloud, and, when I bring the cloud across the earth, ever the bow shall be there as well, and, looking upon it, thou and I shall remember the promise that I make: that no more shall the waters destroy all living creatures as they have done."

Then Noah and his sons went forth into the world and tilled it, and made it fruitful once more; and their children and their children's children multiplied until they were spread abroad over the earth.

(5) THE FIRST CITY

NOW thus far the children of Noah, and his children's children had been all as one family, and all used the same speech. But as years went on, and numbers grew, it befell that the upland valleys became too strait for them. Therefore they fared downwards, first to the lower foothills, then to the plain, till at last, in the great land that lies between the famous rivers Tigris and Euphrates, they found a land broad enough to hold them all, and fruitful enough to feed them. Hitherto no man had conceived in his mind the thought of a city; each household was sufficient unto itself, and dwelt in the midst of its own fields or grasslands. But now into men's hearts there came the plan of the city, with its walls and gates, behind which they might dwell in safety from their enemies, or from the beasts of the forest, going forth in the morning to their labour of the field, and returning in the evening to their fellowship and rest.

So they spake one to another, and said, "Come, let us build a city for our safety, and, for our worship, a mighty tower whose head shall reach to the clouds, so that we may not be scattered from one another, but may abide together in strength, and leave a name that shall endure." Therefore, seeing that in this river-land where they dwelt no building stone was to be found, they gathered the soft clay and moulded bricks to build withal, and between the

courses of bricks they laid asphalt to bind them together. Now in all this there was nothing evil; but, as the mighty work grew, the pride of their hearts grew with it, till their tower, begun for worship and a meeting-place of heaven and earth, became but a token of vainglory and vain confidence. The Lord God beheld the insolence of their pride, and it displeased Him that men should set all their trust in their own strength and wisdom.

Therefore He counselled with Himself to bring to naught all their scheming, and His counsel prevailed. For, as the work grew, strife and dissension, instead of unity, grew with it. Households and clans, jealous of one another, drifted apart. Bit by bit even the common speech which had united them began to fail them, so that one clan no longer could understand what was said to them by those of another clan. So the great plan failed, and the pride of men's hearts was baffled, and in anger and confusion the tribes scattered to the four winds of heaven. Only the great tower remained to mock their failure; and some say that the name of it was called Babel, because it means "Confusion," since there the confusion of men's speech began.

Yet, in the after days, men came once more to the city, and dwelled there; and it grew mightily, and became a famous city, one of the greatest that earth has ever seen. And in their speech these men, too, called their city Babel; but the interpretation of it was not "Confusion" but "The Gate of God"—so splendid and so noble did their city seem to them. And indeed the city of Babel, or Babylon, as men call it still, bred many wise men, and many mighty men of valour. And the chief of them all, a mighty king named Nebuchadnezzar, reared up the great tower again and finished it. In seven stages he built it, each of them coloured with a different colour of one of the host of heaven. This is that Nebuchadnezzar of whom God's prophet Daniel was the servant and the friend. And the base of his mighty tower stands yet in Babel, and may be seen even unto this day.

So the sons of the sons of Noah were scattered abroad throughout the whole earth, each seeking his own ends, and all unwittingly fulfilling the counsel of God: that His world might be brought under the dominion of man, and made fruitful and fit for human

dwelling. Each race has had its own fortunes and misfortunes, its own glories and shames, and each has led the world in turn to the fulfilment of a little more of God's purpose. For, from the race of Shem came the mighty men who drove from the ancient land of Babel the gentler race who dwelt there; and they made the learning of the conquered their own, so that the name of Babylon grew great in the world of wisdom. And they sent forth their shoots into the uplands of the Tigris, and founded there the fierce nation of Assyria, and built the renowned city, Nineveh, that was all but the peer of Babylon for many a day.

And among others that sprang from the stock of Ham, the second son of Noah, there were some that linked the name of their forefather with Khem, the Black Land, as the men who dwelt by the great river Nile loved to call their country, which all men now call Egypt.

And there arose the greatest builders that earth has ever known, men who cleft the everlasting hills to rear their pyramids and temples, and raised aloft in air mighty masses of granite, such as no other human hands have ever hewn, and were cunning above all other men in ancient days to shape stone to the fashion and semblance of a living man. Yet, at the last, some of the sons of Japheth, they whom men call the Greeks, overwent them in this.

But though the sons of Japheth were scattered abroad wider than all the rest, and they came later to wisdom and strength and glory than the sons of either Shem or Ham, yet while the honour of these twain is now nothing but a memory, the strength and glory of Japheth still abides. For from this root are sprung the nations who stand, as at this time, in the forefront of the world, and are chief in all wisdom and craft of hand and brain. So was the world peopled and subdued, in process of time, by the wanderings of the nations.

Part II. *Stories of the Dawn of History*

(1) A PILGRIM HOUSEHOLD

FOR seven long generations after the Flood, the sons of Shem, Noah's first-born, dwelt in the valleys of the eastern mountains, looking down towards the great plains of the Tigris and Euphrates. In the third generation, the name of the head of the clan was Heber, and by his name were known all those of his descendants who came into the land of Canaan, so that they are called Hebrews unto this day. But some say that they got this name, which means "dweller on the other side," because in ancient days they dwelt beyond the great river Euphrates. And in the days of Heber began that wandering of the tribes which was never to end till the earth was peopled. Heber saw these dawnings of division and separation among men, and in sadness of heart he named his first-born son Peleg, which means "Division," for that he knew that never again would the sons of men be one in heart.

Three generations more came and passed, and then it befell that Terah, who ruled over the house of Heber, was smitten with the restless spirit of wandering; and he journeyed down from his eastern mountain valleys and came to the western bank of the river Euphrates, to the town of Ur. At the present, Ur is a spot of desolation in the midst of desolations, with naught to mark where it stood but the remains of its mighty temple tower, rising above the desert wastes more than an hundred miles from the sea. But in those days Ur was a great city, full of trade and wealth; for the blue waters of the Persian Gulf sparkled along its shores, and by its quays were moored the ships of merchantmen from far-off lands.

Not far from its walls—a ten miles or so to the eastward—rose

another fair town named Eridu, which was had in reverence of all men in that land. For in their ignorance they believed that a wondrous being, sent by the gods, came out of the eastern sea, and, landing on the shore at Eridu, brought to mankind the gifts of learning and art, and then returned to the deeps whence he came. But the men of Ur held their town to be the greatest of all towns, and it was in the pride of their heart that they gave it its name; for Ur signifies "The City," as who should say that there was none other city in the world to be named in comparison with it. And the city was given over to the worship of the moon-god, Sin, and to him was built a mighty temple, and a tower that all men might see from afar, the same whose ruin still abides, the home of the lizard and the kite.

There, near this ancient city, or it may be in it, Terah found a home, and there three sons were born to him—Abram, Nahor, and Haran. In the midst of his days Haran died, and his young son Lot was brought up in the home of his uncle Abram; for Abram and his wife Sarai had sorrow of heart because no son had been born to them; and they welcomed Lot, and made him even as their own. So for many years Terah and his sons dwelt in the city of the moon-god, and, since they knew no better, they bowed down before the moon walking in brightness among the stars of night, according to the custom of the land.

But in his old age the wandering spirit came once more upon Terah, and he could no longer abide in Ur. Therefore he took with him his sons, and all their households, and Lot also, the son of the dead Haran; and they made their journey westwards, with intent to go to the land of Canaan. And when they were come to Harran, they pitched their tents, and dwelled there for a season; for the infirmities of age had broken Terah's strength, though they could not quench his spirit. So there, after a while, the aged wanderer laid him down and died, and his eyes never beheld the fair land for which he had set out.

Then the two brethren, Abram and Nahor, with Lot, their nephew, dwelt still in Harran for a time. But, ere long, they were to part from one another; for before Abram there lay a great and strange destiny, with many wanderings and many trials.

(2) THE FATHER OF THE FAITHFUL

FOR God, in His wisdom and love, was purposed to choose out one family to whom He might teach the truth about Himself, and the way of life, that so this knowledge might at last be spread abroad throughout the world; and He had seen that Abram was the fit man for the beginning of this great purpose. So while the sons of Terah dwelt in Harran, Abram heard the voice of God. "Get thee out of thy country," the Lord said to him, "and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee." And God promised that from this childless man should spring a great nation, and that through him all the families of the earth should be blessed. It was a strange and wonderful command and promise, yet Abram never questioned, but obeyed at once. And because of this, his faith in God's promise, God was well pleased with him, and all men since have called him the Father of the Faithful.

So Abram told his wife Sarai—"My Queen"—and his nephew Lot, of the words which God had spoken, and they were well content to go with him. All was made ready for the journey, and at last the black tents were struck, and the caravan set out on its march. Across the wide Arabian Desert they travelled, till at last they saw the great mountains that men call Anti-Lebanon and Hermon lifting their snowy peaks across the western sky, and between the travellers and the hills lay the ancient city of Damascus, white and beautiful amidst its bowers of green. There they turned southwards, past the green hills of Galilee, with the blue waters of the lake lying harp-shaped in the midst, and at last they reached a resting-place at Sichem.

It may be that Abram's heart sank within him as he looked out from his camp; for, fair though the land might be, it was already peopled. The Canaanites were there, fierce men and cruel, who, in the hardness of their hearts, were wont to sacrifice their own flesh and blood, even tender maidens and little children, to their false

gods. Therefore God spoke once again to cheer His servant, promising him that to his children should be given this land whereon he dwelt; and in his gratitude Abram built an altar and offered sacrifice to the Lord who had comforted him. Ever, as his flocks needed fresh pasture, he journeyed southwards, till at last he came to a fair upland in the midst of the country. Great things were to happen there in after days, so that the name of the place should be called "Bethel," "House of God"; but when Abram pitched his camp there, it was still named Luz. There, also, the wanderer reared his altar and prayed to God who was his guide and guard.

Now, after a season, it fell out that a famine came upon the land, and to save his flocks from death Abram must needs journey far south into the wondrous land of Egypt, where the great river Nile keeps all things fruitful, though the skies scarce send any rain. And there Abram's trust in God failed him for a moment, and he fell into grievous error. For when he drew near to Egypt, and thought of the mighty power of its kings and princes, and remembered how fair was his wife Sarai, he dreaded lest some great man should slay him, that he might take Sarai to himself. Therefore he said to his wife, "Say that thou art my sister, not my wife, that so I may escape this danger." And Sarai did as her husband bade her.

Now when they were come into the land, all who beheld Sarai marvelled at her beauty, and the fame of it spread far and wide, till some of the princes of the court told even unto Pharaoh himself, the King and Lord of the Two Lands, how fair a woman was come to Egypt. So Pharaoh sent for her, and placed her in his royal harem, meaning to make her his wife; and he gave great gifts to Abram, because of her. Yet, though Abram had spoken falsely, and brought trouble on himself and his wife, God still guarded them. It befell that great sickness came upon Pharaoh and all his household, and the King was afraid, and believed that this trouble was sent because of the woman whom he had taken from Abram. Sending for Abram and questioning him, he learned the truth, and, sternly rebuking God's servant for his falseness, he bade him take his wife and begone.

ABRAM AND SARAI IN EGYPT.
(Genesis, xii, 11-13.)

So Abram went forth out of Egypt, safe indeed, both he and his wife, and rich in Pharaoh's gifts, but sorely shamed because of the falsehood they had told, for indeed the heathen King had shown himself a truer man than he whom God had chosen.

(3) A WORLDLY CHOICE

ON his return from his unlucky journey to Egypt, Abram made his camp once more beside the old altar which he had built near Bethel. God had blessed him in all that he undertook, and he was very rich, with great flocks and herds grazing all round his tents; while his nephew Lot had become a prosperous flock-master also. Yet their prosperity proved not to be an unmixed blessing, since in the end it severed two good friends. For the herdsmen of Abram's cattle and the herdsmen of Lot's cattle were ever wrangling, each desiring to have the best pasture for his master's herd, till there was neither peace nor comfort in the camp.

At last Abram took his nephew out with himself alone, to where the hillside rolls away down towards the Jordan Valley. As they looked over the wide stretch of fair and fertile land, he said to Lot: "Why should there be a quarrel between us, who are so close kindred? Far better that we should part than that we should quarrel. Behold, you have the whole land to choose from. If you will take the left hand, I will go to the right, or if you depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left." Lot was not like Abram. He saw in his uncle's generous kindness only the chance of grasping at the best. His greedy eyes fixed on the rich green of the deep Jordan Valley, where grass, and corn, and fruit-trees are fed by the moisture of the river, and forced into rank luxuriance by the steaming heat. All is changed now that his eyes fell upon, for the Lord destroyed the cities that lay in the valley, Sodom and Gomorrah, with a fearful destruction that blasted the whole countryside around; but in those days the land lay before him smiling and tempting, as rich as the land of Egypt. So, in his haste to be rich,

Lot chose the Jordan Valley for his dwelling, and, parting from the man who had been a father to him for so long, he drove his flocks down the hillside, and made his camp not far from the city of Sodom, careless that the men of Sodom were wicked with a wickedness that words cannot describe.

Thus Abram was left alone; but when Lot had departed God visited His servant once again, and blessed his generous heart with a new promise. "Look around thee," He said, "north, south, east, and west. All the land that thou seest, I will give to thee and to thy children after thee for ever. Thy children shall be numberless, in the days to come, unless the dust of the earth can be numbered. Take free possession of the length and breadth of the land; for I have given it to thee." Thus Abram was rewarded for the goodness of his heart in the matter of Lot; and he and his household moved southwards once more till they came to Mamre near the ancient city of Hebron. There they camped, and there, as Abram was wont, he built his altar before the tent-door.

Neither was it long before Lot found, to his sorrow, that the richness of a land may only be its danger. For in days past, Chedorlaomer, the mighty King of Elam, away beyond the Euphrates, had coveted the Jordan Valley, and had conquered it, he and his vassal kings. For twelve years the kinglets of the little cities in the valley paid him tribute, but in the thirteenth year they rebelled. Chedorlaomer, with his allies, chiefest among them Hammurabi, the wise King of Babylon, came sweeping down from the north upon the rebels with a mighty power. Down the eastern side of the Jordan they drove with fire and sword. Not even the Rephaim, the big men who dwelt in the city of the two-horned goddess, Astarte, could withstand them, neither their great kindred, the Zuzim and the Emim, far less the cave-dwelling Horites, who burrowed in the flanks of Mount Seir.

The invading host swept on to the very edge of the southern wilderness; then turning westwards and then northwards the Elamite and his allies marched up the vale of Jordan almost to where the palm-trees of Engedi looked down upon the river. There the sheikhs of the five towns of the lower Jordan met the invaders in battle-array; but the hardy northerners of Elam and

Babylon dashed in pieces the line of the sodden pleasure-lovers of Sodom and Gomorrah. The whole army of the southern sheikhs was scattered in wild flight to the mountains, and the victors sacked the defenceless cities of the plain, and marched homewards. Among their plunder they carried with them Lot and his household, and all that he had.

So there came a fugitive from the field to the tent of Abram at Mamre, and told him of his nephew's evil plight. Swiftly Abram called to his aid the three Amorite sheikhs, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre, who dwelt beside him; then arming his own housecarls and shepherds and herdsmen, three hundred and eighteen hardy men, he pursued after the conquerors. Northwards up the Jordan stream he followed on their tracks, until at last he came upon them camping in the skirts of Hermon, and in a fierce night attack, pressed from several points, surprised and scattered them, chasing the fugitives almost to Damascus.

Then Abram turned back again and gathered up the spoil of the spoilers, gladdest of heart at this, that Lot and all his household were saved by his victory from slavery. As he journeyed joyfully homewards there met him at the King's Dale the new sheikh of beaten Sodom, eager to thank his champion; but to him Abram gave but little heed. There came forth also to welcome him an aged and holy figure, Melchizedek, whose name means "King of Righteousness," priest and king of the Holy City, Salem. Bearing in his hands bread and wine, he came to refresh the victors, and, as Abram bowed before this ancient saint, Melchizedek blessed him, and blessed God who had given him the victory. So Abram, as was right, gave to this true servant of the most high God one-tenth part of all the spoil that he had taken from the Elamite; and the aged priest-king went his way back to his City of Peace. Who he was, or how the true faith of God had been kept alive in his line, none may tell; he comes and passes, and we know again that God has His witnesses in every age.

Very different was Abram's bearing to the ruler of evil Sodom. Grateful for the rescue of his friends, the sheikh bade the victor keep all the spoil of the city if it seemed good to him, so that he restored the captives. But Abram would have none of the tainted

wealth of Sodom. "I have sworn by God most high," he said, "that I will touch nothing of thine—not a thread nor a sandal-thong, lest thou shouldst say 'I have made Abram rich.' What my young men have eaten you will not grudge them; neither do I deny my Amorite helpers their portion; but for myself,—nothing out of Sodom!"

So Abram returned again to the peace of his camp. As for Lot, Sodom, even with its dangers, drew him still; and he went back to dwell on its tainted soil.

(4) "AS THE STARS OF HEAVEN"

ONCE again the Lord appeared to Abram after his victory and said to him, "Fear not, Abram, I am thy shield, and thy reward shall be exceeding great." But Abram's heart was heavy at the thought that he had none to inherit the promises that God made, and he answered bitterly, "O Lord God, what wilt Thou give me; for I go hence childless, and my own heir must be my servant, Eliezer the Damascene?" But God answered him gently, "Not Eliezer, but one of thine own flesh and blood shall be thine heir." Then, leading him forth under the midnight sky, where the countless myriads of stars burned in the dark vault, God said: "Look to the heavens and see if thou canst number the stars. So many shall be thy descendants." And the childless man believed God's word even in this, and the Lord was well pleased with his faith.

Therefore He pledged to him the Land of Promise once more, and when Abram craved a sign to assure him God gave him that also. He bade His servant take an heifer, a she-goat, and a ram, each of three years old, and with these a turtle-dove, and a young pigeon, which He commanded him to sacrifice, dividing each beast into two parts, laying the parts on this side and that; but the birds he did not divide, but laid the dove on one hand and the pigeon on the other. And when this was done, Abram sat by the sacrifice and drove the vultures from it until the night should

come. For this was the ancient manner of a covenant: that He who made the promise should pass between the two parts of the sacrifice; and Abram waited for the passing of the Lord.

The sun sank down in the west, and, as the shadows fell, a deep sleep came upon the weary man, and with it a trouble of spirit, as though horrible darkness compassed him about. But out of the darkness came the voice of God. "Know assuredly," It said, "that thy descendants shall be strangers and slaves in a foreign land. For four hundred years shall their bondage last, and I will judge their oppressors; and afterwards they shall come forth from bondage with great wealth. As for thyself, thine end shall be peace, and in a good old age shalt thou be buried. And in the fourth generation, when the wickedness of the people of this land is at its height, thy children shall come hither again." Then out of the darkness came a vision. A smoking fire and a flaming torch moved slowly down the path between the two parts of the sacrifice, and Abram knew that God had set His seal to the promise.

Nevertheless, the days went by and no child was born to Abram; and Sarai, his wife, grew impatient because the promise was not yet fulfilled. So she persuaded Abram to wed her bond-servant, an Egyptian maiden named Hagar, in the hope that God might send the child of His promise thus. But this was the beginning of many sorrows to Abram and to Sarai, and not least to poor, innocent Hagar. For Sarai grew jealous of the Egyptian girl after a season and drove her away from Abram's tents; and though God met her in the wilderness and sent her back again, yet there was never peace in the camp afterwards till she and her son were driven forth once more.

For a son was born to her, a bright, sturdy, quick-tempered, open-hearted boy, whom Abram named Ishmael; but the sight of him was a plague to Sarai's jealous heart, instead of a joy, as she had hoped. When the boy was thirteen years old, God spoke once again to Abram, and bade him be true and faithful, and renewed to him all the promises that had been given before.

And He bade Abram change his name, and call himself no longer Abram, "Lofty Father," but Abraham, "Father of a Multitude"; while the name of his wife was to be changed henceforth to Sarah,

"Princess"—"For," said the Lord, "I will bless her and give a son to thee and her, and she shall be a mother of nations: kings shall be her descendants."

When Abraham heard that promise, he bowed to the ground, and laughing, partly for wonder and doubt, but partly, too, for joy and hope, he said in his heart, "Shall a son be born to a man an hundred years old, and to a woman whose years are ninety?" And wavering in his mind he prayed the Lord to bless the boy who played already about the tent-door. "Oh, that Ishmael might live before thee!" But the Lord answered him: "Ishmael shall have his own blessing. Twelve princes shall be his sons, and a great nation shall descend from him. But My covenant is with the son who shall be born to thee and Sarah at this time next year."

(5) THE DAY OF THE LORD

ABRAHAM sat one day in the shelter of his tent-door, among the oaks of Mamre. It was the mid-heat of the day, when men will scarce travel abroad save in urgent need; but as he looked forth, behold! three travellers were drawing near. Abraham ran to welcome them, and to him who seemed the chief he said: "O my Lord, do me the honour not to pass my tent-door. Let my servants fetch water to wash your feet, and rest yourselves under this oak-tree. I will fetch a little bread that you may eat and be strengthened, and afterwards you shall go on your way again." The strangers consented, and Abraham hurried to make preparations. Sarah baked bread, a calf was killed and cooked, and milk and curds were set beside the bread and meat; and Abraham stood by, and courteously served his guests as they took their meal in the pleasant shade of the oak.

Then the chief of the travellers turned to his host, and said, "Where is Sarah, thy wife?" Abraham answered, "Behold, she is in the tent." Even as he spoke, he knew that this travel-stained wayfarer was no mere man, and that the Lord was come near unto

him again. So God spoke to him, promising once more that Sarah should have a son. And Sarah, behind the tent-door, heard the promise, and laughed in her heart, as her husband had done before, but more from doubt than from hope. But the Lord rebuked her, and bade Abraham remember that nothing was too hard for the Almighty.

Now the time drew nigh for the wayfarers to go on their journey, and Abraham accompanied them as they went towards Sodom. And as they journeyed, the Lord said to Abraham, "Because I have heard an evil report of the wickedness of Sodom and Gomorrah, I have come hither to see, and, if need be, to judge." As He spake, His two companions passed on towards Sodom, and Abraham was left alone in the presence of the Lord. Then Abraham came near, and pled with the Lord for the wicked city. "Wilt Thou destroy righteous and wicked together?" he said. "It may be that there are fifty good men in the city—wilt Thou not spare it for their sake? Surely the righteous and the wicked can never be alike in Thy sight! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

Then said Jehovah, "If I find fifty good men in Sodom, I will spare the whole town for their sake." So Abraham took courage and pled again with God, and God promised him that if He found five and forty, forty, thirty, or even twenty good men in the city, He would hold His hand. Then Abraham made his last plea. "Oh, let not the Lord be angry," he said, "and I shall speak only this once. It may be that ten good men shall be found in Sodom." And God answered him, "If I find ten good men there, I will not destroy the city." So the Lord went on His errand of judgment, and Abraham turned homewards from his merciful pleading.

Now the two angel messengers who had been sent into Sodom dwelt that night in the wicked city, in the house of Lot, Abraham's nephew; and before the dawn they had seen enough of the vileness of the place to know that it must needs be destroyed. Therefore, they bade Lot gather all his family and hasten to flee with them before the storm of God's judgment fell upon the town. So Lot went forth to warn his sons-in-law; but when he told them of the coming destruction they would not listen, for they thought he was mocking them. And when the day dawned, the angels commanded

him to take at least the friends who were with him in the house, his wife, and his two unmarried daughters, and to escape. Still he would have lingered over the riches he had gained in that vile town; but the angels drew him and his out of the gates by main force. "Escape for thy life," they cried, "look not behind, nor linger in the plain, but flee to the mountain, lest thou be overwhelmed."

Lot's heart was still in the rich plain, and the flight to the mountain seemed terrible to him. "Oh, my Lord," he said to the angel, "since you have shewed me so much mercy, grant me this also. Here is a little town close at hand, a very little one. Let me escape to it." "I grant this request also," said the angel, "but hasten to it; for my work waits till you are safe within its walls." So Lot fled for his life to the little town of Zoar, and passed its gate just as the sun rose over the plain of Jordan. Then God's judgments were loosed! Over the whole plain the lightning flashed; and, as the fire fell from heaven, the beds of pitch that underlay the soil blazed up fiercely, and the whole land was shrouded in flame and foul smoke and vapour. Ere she entered the gate of Zoar, Lot's wife turned for one last look at the evil city where lay the treasures of her covetous heart; and even as she paused, the fumes overcame her, and the salt vapours swathed her round, and she stood there dead and dreadful, a statue of salt.

At the dawn of day Abraham arose, and, with anxious heart, hastened to the spot where he had pled with the Lord the night before. He looked from the hillside across the plain where Sodom and Gomorrah had stood, but they had vanished. Only a great cloud of black smoke went up from all the land like the smoke of a furnace.

HAGAR AND ISHMAEL.
(Genesis, xxi, 14–19.)

(6) THE CHILD OF THE PROMISE

NOW came the time when God's promise to His servant was fulfilled. A son was born to Abraham and Sarah, and remembering how they had both laughed at the very idea of such a thing, and laughing now again with joy because what seemed impossible had come true, they named the boy Isaac, which means "Laughter." So there was joy and mirth in the lonely tent as the baby grew. Yet across the brightness there came a shadow; for Ishmael, Isaac's half-brother, could scarcely be expected to love the child whose coming shut him out of all hope of being his father's heir. Sarah, too, was watchful and jealous; and, when Isaac was perhaps two or three years old, the quarrel that had long been brewing burst out. For then Abraham made a feast, as was the custom, in honour of the weaning of the little child; and in the midst of the rejoicing, Sarah came with a bitter complaint to her husband. Ishmael, she said, had been jeering at the little Isaac and his splendours, and her heart was hot with anger. "Cast out this slave and her son," she cried, forgetting that it was she herself who had given Hagar in marriage to Abraham, "for the son of a slave shall not share the inheritance with my son Isaac."

Abraham's heart was sore, for he loved his son Ishmael; but God bade him do as Sarah wished. "Isaac shall be thine heir," He said, "but grieve not for Ishmael, for he too shall be father of a nation, because he is thy son." So, with the dawn of the next day, Abraham gave Hagar bread and a water-skin for her journey, and sent her forth with her son; and with sore hearts they two turned their backs upon the black tents, and wandered southwards. Ere long they lost themselves, for in the south country of Palestine the desert rolls close up to the fertile land at Beer-sheba. From sand-hill to sand-hill they toiled, till the water was spent in the skin, and there was no trace of a spring. Then Ishmael's strength began to fail, and Hagar's heart was near to breaking! She laid her boy

down in the scanty shade of an acacia bush, and then she left him and crept away until she was about a bowshot from him, for she could not bear to see him die. So she sat with bowed head and wept, and waited for death.

But God was watching over her and her child in their need. There came an angel voice to her: "Fear not, Hagar, God has heard the cry of Ishmael. Rise up and lift your son and lead him on, for in the years to come a great nation shall spring from him." Now when Hagar obeyed, she was guided to a spring of cool, clear water, and there she filled her water-skin, and came back with it to Ishmael; and the boy drank, and his strength returned.

So they two made their home in the wild south country. God watched over them, and Ishmael grew and became a skilful archer. When he was old enough to think of marriage, his mother's heart turned to her own homeland; and she and her son crossed the desert to Egypt, and there the young hunter found a wife.

(7) A LESSON ABOUT GOD'S HEART

NOW the time came when God was minded to teach Abraham a lesson about the heart of the Father in heaven. For, in the land where he dwelt with his household, were men who counted that the noblest offering one could make to Heaven was the life of a first-born son; and it may be that Abraham had questioned with himself whether he was serving God aright so long as he withheld Isaac from being sacrificed. So God's voice whispered in his heart the very suggestion of this dreadful offering. "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and journey into the land of Moriah, and there offer him for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains that I will tell thee of."

Abraham did not question the command. With a heavy heart he made his preparations, and taking his son with him, and two of his household servants, and the wood for the sacrifice, he went forth to do this dreadful bidding that had come to him, saying naught to any man. For two days the little company journeyed,

and on the third day Abraham saw a green hill lifting its head against the sky far away, and knew that this was the place where he must slay his son. He bade the servants stay at the foot of the hill, and he himself, with Isaac, climbed the long slope, with such thoughts in his heart as you may imagine! Isaac carried on his young shoulders the wood on which he was to die, while his father bore the fire-pan and the sacrificial knife. So they climbed for a while in silence; and then Isaac said, "My father," and Abraham answered, "Yes, my son?" "Here is the fire and the wood," said the lad, "but where is the lamb for the sacrifice?" "My son, God Himself will provide a lamb for the burnt-offering." And after that there fell silence between them again.

At length they came to the top of the hill, and there Abraham made all things ready. The altar was built of the rough stones that were scattered around, the wood was laid upon it in order, and then Abraham bound his son and laid him upon the altar. The moment had come when he must quench all the hopes of his heart in the blood of his dearest, and he lifted the knife on high to smite. In that very moment came the call of an angel out of heaven. "Lay not thine hand upon the lad, nor harm him. Now I know that thou fearest God, since thou hast not withheld thine only son from Me." The knife dropped, and Abraham looked around. There at his back was a ram, tangled in a bush by his horns. The Lord had provided the burnt-offering; and, with gladness in his heart, he took the beast and sacrificed him on the altar where his son had lain.

Once more the angel spoke to him adding promise to promise of blessing because of his faithfulness. So the father and his son given back from the dead went down the hillside with joy singing in their hearts; and when they had joined the servants they journeyed home in peace to Beer-sheba. The lesson was learned; never again would Abraham dream that God could be pleased by the misery of His own children.

(8) COURTSHIP AND MARRIAGE IN THE OLDEN TIME

THE years passed on, and Abraham and his wife came to a ripe old age in quietness and peace. Then, while they dwelled by the ancient city of Hebron, came the time for them to part. For there Sarah died, after her long pilgrimage, being an hundred and twenty-seven years old. In the silent tent, where his life's friend lay still and white, Abraham mourned for her, and for the days that would not return; then he rose up and went forth to where the Hittites who dwelt around were wont to gather. "I am a stranger among you," he said, "and have no land of my own. Grant me therefore a burying-place here, that I may lay my dead in it." And the sons of Heth answered him: "Listen, my lord; thou art a great chief among us; bury thy dead in the tomb of ours that thou likest best. Not one of us but will freely give thee his burying-place."

Abraham bowed low in gratitude for their kindness. "Since this is your mind towards me," he said, "speak, I pray you, to Ephron, son of Zohar, that he may give me the cave of Machpelah, which is in the end of his field; and I will pay him its full value, that it may be a burying-place for me and mine for ever." "Nay, my lord," said Ephron, "listen to me. Freely I give thee the field and the cave before these witnesses; bury thy dead." Once again Abraham bowed. "Nay," he said, "but since thou art willing to give it, let me give thee the money for it." And Ephron answered, as an Eastern answers in a bargain, "Hearken, my lord! Doubtless the land is worth four hundred shekels of silver—a trifle between such men as thee and me. Bury therefore thy dead." So Abraham understood, and the scales were brought before the witnesses, and he weighed out the four hundred shekels of silver to Ephron.

Thus the first possession of Abraham in the Land of Promise was a tomb, and therein he buried Sarah, his wife.

Now when Sarah was gone and Abraham felt old age growing

REBEKAH AT THE WELL.
(Genesis, xxiv, 15–28.)

upon him, his heart was anxious for his son, lest Isaac should wed a maid from the heathen around. Therefore he called to him his trusty steward, Eliezer the Damascene, and bade him make oath that he would take his journey into Harran, and bring back a wife of the stock of Terah for the young man. "God who has promised me this land," he said, "will send His angel before thee, and thou shalt bring a wife for Isaac from our own kindred." So Eliezer pledged himself to do his master's will, and with ten camels and many costly gifts he set out on his long journey.

It was evening when the little caravan drew near to the city where the descendants of Nahor dwelt in the Land of the Rivers; and the maidens of the place were coming forth, as was their custom, to draw water from the well by the gate. Eliezer made his camels kneel down by the well, and in his heart he made a prayer to God to further the plan he had in mind. "O Lord God of my master Abraham," he said, "send me now good fortune. Behold, I stand here by the well, and the maidens come forth to draw water. I shall say to one of them, 'I pray thee, let down thy pitcher and give me to drink.' If she answer, 'Drink; and I will water thy camels also,' then may this be the wife appointed for Isaac; and it shall be the sign of Thy goodness to my master."

While the prayer was yet on his lips, there came forth a maiden, exceeding fair to look upon, and her name was Rebekah, daughter of Bethuel, Abraham's nephew. Her pitcher was upon her shoulder, and going down the steps to the well, she filled it, and came up again. As she was turning homewards, Eliezer ran to her and said, "I pray thee, let me drink a little water from thy pitcher." Courteously she answered him, "Drink, my lord," and letting down the heavy pitcher upon her hand she gave him a draught. "Now," she said, when his thirst was quenched, "I will draw water for the camels also, till they have had enough." So she emptied her pitcher into the trough by the well-side, and ran down the steps and drew more water, till the camels were satisfied.

Eliezer stood by, marvelling at the grace and kindness of the maiden, and hoping that God had given him the sign he sought. So when her task was done he took a costly earring and two heavy golden bracelets to give to her, and as he gave them, he

said, "Tell me, whose daughter art thou? And is there room in thy father's house for me and mine to lodge in?" "I am the daughter of Bethuel, the son of Nahor," she said, "and we have room and plenty both for thee and for thy camels." Then Eliezer knew that his quest was ended, and there before the maiden he bowed his head and gave thanks to God for that in His goodness He had led him to the house of all houses that Abraham's heart would have desired.

So Rebekah ran home and told her family what had happened to her, and showed them her new treasures. Laban, her brother, was a crafty man and a worldly, and when he saw the massy gold on his sister's arms, he knew that such gifts must come from some great chief; and in haste he ran to Eliezer where he stood beside his camels by the well. "Come in, thou blessed of the Lord," he cried loudly as he came. "Why dost thou stand without? All is ready for thee and for thy camels." So Eliezer went with Laban, and Abraham's nephew unharnessed the camels and spread fodder before them, and brought water to wash the feet of Eliezer and his companions.

But when meat was set before him Eliezer said, "Nay, I will not eat until I have told my errand." So he told them that he was Abraham's servant, and how rich and great his master had become, how he had but one son, Isaac, and how his heart was anxious lest the young man should marry a heathen. All the story of his journey, and his prayer by the well, and its answer, he told them, and when he had done, he said, "Now, if you will deal kindly and truly with my master, tell me; and if not, tell me, that I may know the way that I must take." "This is God's sending," answered Laban and his father Bethuel; "we have no right to decide. Here is Rebekah; take her and go, and let her be thy master's son's wife, as God hath willed."

When Eliezer heard their answer, he was glad at heart, and gave thanks to God. Opening his camel-packs, he gave costly robes and jewellery of gold and silver to Rebekah and to her friends; and in great content he and his men sat down and ate and drank. One night they abode with Laban, and next morning they made ready to return. Laban and his mother pled that Rebekah might

stay with them a few days before she left them for ever, but Eliezer would not hear of delay. "Hinder me not," he said. "God hath prospered me. Let me go, that I may return to my master." "We will leave it then to Rebekah herself," they said. So they called her, and said, "Wilt thou go with this man?" And she answered, "I will go."

So with blessings and good wishes they sent Rebekah away on her long journey, with her nurse Deborah, and with the faithful Eliezer and his men.

Now it fell out that, when they returned, Isaac was dwelling in the south country of Palestine. It was his custom at even-tide to walk in the quiet country and meditate and pray. This night, as he looked northwards, lo! a caravan was coming down the hill-track. Rebekah, seated on her camel, saw the solitary man, and dismounted, as was the custom, till he should pass. "What man is this," she said to Eliezer, "who comes across the moor to meet us?" "It is my master," answered the old servant; and when she knew it was her destined husband, she veiled her face, since a maiden must not be seen of her bridegroom till the wedding-day.

So Eliezer came to Isaac, and told him all the fortunes of the journey, and how he had brought him a bride of his own kindred; and Isaac led Rebekah to the empty tent of his mother Sarah, and in due course they were wedded; and Isaac's heart, sore for the loss of his mother, was comforted with a new love.

(9) THE CHEAT WHO BECAME A PRINCE

The Deception

FOR many a day it seemed as though Abraham would never see God's promise being fulfilled to Isaac, as it had been to him. Twenty years came and went over the heads of the wedded pair or ever a child was born to them. And then the old man's heart was gladdened ere he was gathered to his rest, for twin sons were born to Isaac and Rebekah. Esau and Jacob they were named, and Abraham watched the boys grow to

sturdy youth for fifteen years. Very different were they in nature, though alike in age. Esau was rough and bold and open, shaggy and strong, a fierce hunter and child of the wide hills and the free air, swift to anger and swift to love. Jacob was his opposite, quiet and sleek and secret, readier to think and plan than to talk, with a heart not quick and fiery like his brother's, but slow to love and slower to forget. Abraham saw them grow from babbling childhood till they were almost men—Esau ever on the hills with his bow, keen to spy and strike his game, Jacob quietly helpful about the camp. Then at length, in a good old age, God's last call came to His servant, and the great Pilgrim Father passed on his pilgrimage through the Valley of the Shadow into the Light beyond.

Now just as different as were the two boys from each other, so different were the feelings of their parents towards them. Isaac, gentle, quiet, and dreamy, loved the boisterous, rough, outspoken Esau; Rebekah, strong and determined, loved the quiet Jacob—each heart to its opposite. And out of this division of the household there sprang great sorrow and contention, as you shall hear.

For it fell out on a day, that Esau came back from his moorland hunting, hungry and faint, and as he passed to his tent, Jacob was making ready a dish of savoury lentils over the camp fire, and the scent of the food filled the hunter's heart with desire. "Give me some of that red stuff," he cried, "for I am faint." Jacob looked up from his task with a sudden gleam in his eyes. "For a price!" he said. "Sell me thy birthright for the food." For Esau was by a little the older of the two, and would inherit before his brother. "What good shall a birthright do to a dead man?" cried Esau, for ever the pain, or the craving, or the passion of the moment seemed all important to him; but Jacob could think long thoughts and look ahead. So in his cunning, turning a passing whim of his brother's into a binding covenant, he made Esau swear to barter his birthright for a meal of lentils; and the careless hunter ate and drank, and swung into his own tent, and forgot what he had done, and how he had sold God's promise to him for a meal.

Thereafter Isaac dwelt in the south country, moving from place to place, and growing in wealth. He had his own vexations,

even as other men, for once and again the Philistines drove him from the wells that he had dug. But Isaac, a man of peace, strove not with them; and at last they wearied of vexing one who harmed nobody. So they left him in quiet possession of his well at Shebah, and indeed in some sort became his friends, seeing that the Lord was with this gentle soul. By and by old age fell upon him, and with it a sorer affliction—blindness. And the blindness gave to Jacob and his mother the chance that they desired to oust Esau from the place of the first-born. For the old man called his favourite son to him one day. "I am old," he said, "and death may call me any hour. Take thy bow and thy quiver, and go forth to the moor and fetch me some venison, and make me a savoury dish, such as I love, that I may bless thee before I die." Rebekah heard, and in her jealous heart she swore that Isaac's blessing should not go to her elder son, but to her own favourite.

Therefore she called Jacob to her. "Go to the flock," she said, "and fetch two kids, and I will make of them a savoury dish, such as thy father loveth, and thou shalt carry it in to thy father that he may bless thee before he dies." But Jacob's heart failed him; "Esau is not like me," he said, "he is shaggy. What if my father should put forth his hand and touch me, and know that he is deceived? Then I might bring his curse upon myself instead of his blessing." "On my head be the curse, my son; only do thou as I have said."

So the crafty pair agreed. Jacob fetched the kids, and his mother cooked the dish. Then she took clothes of her elder son that lay in the tent, and clad the younger in them; on his hands and on his neck she fastened rough pieces of goatskin; and she gave him the savoury meat and bread to carry to his father. Quaking in his false heart, the deceiver came into the tent of his blind father. "My father," he said; and the old man answered, "Who art thou, my son?" "I am Esau, thy first-born. I have done as thou didst bid me: rise, therefore, and eat of my venison, and give me thy blessing." "How is it," said Isaac, "that thou hast found the game so quickly?" And, adding shame to shame, the liar answered, "Because the Lord thy God brought it to me."

Vaguely Isaac was aware of something wrong. "Come near,"

he said, "that I may touch thee, and know if thou be my son Esau, and none other." Jacob came close to his father, and the old man's shaking hands touched the rough goatskin. Still he was perplexed. "The voice is like Jacob's voice," he said, "but the hands are Esau's hands." Hesitating, he asked the truth once more; and Jacob, growing more confident before his father's helplessness, gave him a glib lie in answer. Then Isaac ate and drank, and bade his son kiss him before he gave the blessing. And, as Jacob stooped to give the false kiss, the old man smelled the fresh scent of the hunter's garb. "See," he cried, and his words of blessing shaped themselves into a rude song,

"See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field
Blessed by Jehovah!
Dew of the heaven, wealth of the earth, corn and wine in plenty,
May the Lord give thee:
Tribes of the earth, let them serve thee, and nations
Bow down before thee;
Over thy brethren, and over the sons of thy mother,
Be thou the master:
Cursed be thy curser, but he that doth bless thee,
Let him be blessed!"

Scarce had Jacob gone out from his father's tent with his ill-gotten blessing, when Esau strode in with a dish of venison from the hill. "Arise, my father," he said, "eat of thy son's venison, and bless me." There fell a great fear upon Isaac, and trembling in every limb, he cried, "Who art thou?" "Who, but thy son, thy first-born son Esau?" "Where, then," he faltered, "where is he who brought the dish for me, and I have eaten of it, and have blessed him? Yea, and my blessing stands." Now when Esau heard that, he knew what had befallen him; and with a bitter cry of sorrow, he said, "Bless me, even me also, O my father!" And the old man answered him, "With deceit thy brother hath come and carried off thy blessing." In hot anger spake Esau: "Well named is he, Supplanter by name and by nature. Twice hath he beguiled me—once of my birthright, and now of my blessing. Yet, O my father, hast thou never a blessing for me?"

"Lo," said Isaac, "thy lord have I made him, to order his brethren as servants; corn and wine have I bestowed on him. O my son, what is left to give thee?" But Esau would not be denied. "Hast thou but one blessing, my father?" he cried. "Bless me, even me also, O my father!" And the strong hunter wept. Then, at the cry of his son's misery, a vision of the future came to the darkened eyes of the old man. "Behold," he said,

"Far from the gross wealth of earth and its treasure,
Shall be thy dwelling!
Over thy head the free heaven in its glory
Dew, sun, and starlight:
Warrior thou shalt be, the sword in thy strong hand
Keep thee in safety:
Yet, for a season, unto thy deceiver
Thou shalt be subject:
Then shall come strength, and with strength shall come freedom,
His yoke shall be broken!"

Nevertheless Esau hated Jacob for the trick that had been put upon him. Small wonder! "It will not be long before my father dies," he said; "when he is gone I shall slay my brother." Esau was ever loud and frank, and it was not long before his threats reached Rebekah's ears. She deemed it better to lose her favourite for a season than to lose him for ever; so she sent for Jacob. "My son," she said, "thy brother has vowed to avenge his wrong by thy death. But you know Esau, as I know him. Fierce anger, quickly spent! Listen to me. Flee for a while to Harran, to my brother Laban, and dwell with him. By and by Esau will cool, and then you may return. Why should I lose both my sons in one day?" So it was agreed between these two.

But Rebekah had to find another story for her husband, and she found it in her own crooked fashion, with a stroke by the way at Esau. For Esau had wedded two Hittite wives, to the sorrow of his father and mother. So Rebekah put the blame on him and his marriage. "I am weary of my life," she said to her husband, "because of these Hittite women. If Jacob should marry another of them, it would be my death." So, prompted by his crafty wife,

Isaac laid his charge upon his younger son. "Do not thou wed a Canaanite woman. Get thee to thy mother's kindred in the river-land, and find a wife there in the household of Laban, thine uncle. And may God bless thee and make of thy children a great nation to inherit this land, as He promised to Abraham." So Rebekah had her way, and saved her favourite from his brother's righteous anger; but her success was of small profit to her, for she never looked upon Jacob's face again.

The Wandering

Now Jacob went forth from the camp at Beer-sheba, journeying towards the Land of the Rivers. Northwards he passed along the long mountain ridge of Palestine, till he was weary and the darkness fell; then he gathered stones and made a wind-shelter and a place for his head, and lay down to sleep under the open sky. He slept and he dreamed. Behold! before his eyes there stretched up heavenwards a great, many-hued stairway, rising stage after stage from the earth, until its summit seemed to touch the sky—such a stairway as men build around their temple-towers in that land of his fathers whither he was bound. Upon the glittering steps mighty angels of God came and went, and from the far-off height of it came a voice that Jacob knew to be the voice of God.

"I am the God of Abraham and of Isaac," said the Lord, "to thee and to thy children I give this land. Thy children shall be numberless, even as the dust. West and east, north and south shall they spread; and through thee and through them shall My blessing come upon all men. Lo! now I am with thee. Where thou goest I will guard thee, till thou come again to this land; neither will I leave thee until My promise is fulfilled to thee."

The voice fell silent, and the vision faded. Jacob waked from his sleep, wondering and awe-stricken. "Surely," he said to himself, "Jehovah is in this place, and I knew it not. This is a place of dread—the very House of God and Gate of Heaven." Then as the dawn came over the hilltop, he piled into a cairn the stones that he had gathered, and upon the top stone of the cairn he poured oil to dedicate the spot to God. And he called the place

Bethel, "House of God"; but before that time it was called Luz, "Almond-tree Town," though no almond-trees grow there now. As the day grew brighter, Jacob stood by the cairn and vowed a vow. "If God will be with me," he said, "and will keep me whither I go, and will give me food and clothing, so that I come once more to my father's house in peace, then shall Jehovah be my God, and this cairn shall be God's House, and of all that God gives me, to Him will I give the tenth." And how God's promise and Jacob's vow were kept, you shall hear.

After long wanderings he came to the ancient land of his fathers. It was high noon, and in the midst of the burning plain was a well, with three flocks of sheep gathered around it; and a great stone lay upon the well's mouth. Jacob, himself a skilful shepherd, asked the shepherds why they waited; and they told him that it was the custom only to open the well when all the flocks around were gathered, that so the water might be kept cool and fresh. Then he questioned them if perchance they might know his uncle Laban whom he sought, and they answered, "We know him, and he is well; and see, while we are speaking, here comes Rachel, his daughter, with her father's sheep."

Then Jacob's heart leaped for joy. He sprang forward and rolled away the stone from the well-mouth, and drew water for the sheep, and with tears of joy he kissed Rachel and told her who he was. The young shepherdess ran lightly home and told her father, and Laban came swiftly, as he had come to Eliezer in a bygone day. Warmly he welcomed his nephew, and brought him to his house, and Jacob dwelt with him for a month.

And when the month was past, Laban, who knew when he had found a good helper, desired to bind Jacob to his service. "Though we be kin," he said, "why should you serve me for naught? Tell me, what shall thy wages be?" Now Laban had two daughters—Rachel, the younger, beautiful and gracious, and Leah, who was older, and whose eyes were weak. Ever since the day when he had seen the fair shepherdess coming with her flock, Jacob had loved Rachel. "Seven years will I serve thee," he said, "if thou wilt give me Rachel for my wife." "So be it," said Laban, "better that I should give her to my own kin than to

a stranger; abide with me." So for seven years Jacob served, his only wage the hope of wedding Rachel, and the years seemed but days, because he loved her so well.

At length the seven years were over, and Jacob claimed his bride. Laban feigned to assent, and prepared the wedding-feast; and when all were gathered in rejoicing, he gave to his nephew a veiled bride. But the morning light shewed Jacob that he who had beguiled his brother had been himself beguiled, for the wife that he had wedded was not Rachel, but her elder sister Leah. In hot anger he sought Laban. "What means this?" he cried. "Was it not for Rachel that I served? Why hast thou thus put a cheat upon me?" Smoothly the cunning Laban answered him: "It is not the custom of our land for the younger to be wedded before the first-born. Let the wedding-feast run out its week. Then we shall have another wedding, and Rachel shall be thine also; and thereafter thou shalt serve me another seven years."

Since it could be no better, Jacob agreed. The feast ran its course, and when the week was done, he wedded Rachel, and then for seven years more he served for his wife, as he had served seven years for the promise of her. And Jacob learned that craft will always meet with craft; for he and his uncle, a well-matched pair, strove through all these years to see which should get the better of the other. Ten times Laban changed his nephew's wages; but ever the more he strove to overreach Jacob, the more the bargain seemed to turn to the profit of the younger man, till Laban's sons were furious with envy, and growled, "Jacob has robbed us of all our father's wealth."

Small love had ever been between the two; but now it was less than ever, and Jacob saw it. So he called Leah and Rachel out to the open pasture, where he might speak with none to overhear. There he told them of all the envy and the falseness with which their father had treated him, and also how God had spoken to him, bidding him return to Canaan with his wives and children. Leah and Rachel needed little persuasion. "What is our father to us, or what does he care for us?" they said. "He sold us, and gained the price of us himself; and now he treats us as strangers. Thank God you have gained something from him for us and our

children. Do thou what is in thy heart, as God hath bidden thee."

Now so it fell out that about this time Laban went to another camp for the sheep-shearing. So Jacob gathered his household, his wives, their servants, and the eleven sons and one daughter who had been born to him and them, and all the wealth and the herds that he had gained. His wives and his children he put upon camels, and, driving his flocks before him, he journeyed away from the Land of the Rivers towards his home. Ere they fled from Harran, Rachel stole from her father's house the fetish-images in which he trusted, and bore them with her. It may be she dreaded their power in Laban's hands, or it may be she wished to vex him by their loss.

Not till three days were past did Laban hear of the flight. Then, gathering his clan, he pressed after the lumbering caravan in hot pursuit across the desert; and, after a seven days' chase, he overtook the fugitives in the skirts of Mount Gilead, on the east side of Jordan. Fain would he have done Jacob a mischief, for his heart was hot with anger, but God spake to him in a dream of the night, and forbade him. Nevertheless, when they met he spoke fiercely: "Why hast thou carried off my daughters like slaves taken in a foray? Why all this secret stealing away? Why didst thou not tell me, that I might send thee away with feasting and music, and kiss my daughters and my grandchildren ere we parted? Easily could I harm thee now, but God has held my hand. Yet, even though thy longing for home was so sore, what need to steal my fetish from me?"

Now Jacob knew not that Rachel had stolen the fetish. "If one of mine has taken thy fetish," he cried, "he shall die. Search for thine own, and take it to thee." So Laban sought, in Jacob's tent, and Leah's, and the servants' tents; but nought of his could he find. Last, he went into the tent of Rachel, but his daughter had hidden the fetish in the camel-saddle and sat upon it. So Laban was baffled, and his search was vain. Now it was Jacob's turn to be angry. "What have I done against thee?" he said bitterly. "Thou hast pursued me as though I were a thief. Thou hast searched my goods. Put what thou hast found of thine between

us and thy clan, that they may judge betwixt us. For twenty years have I been with thee. My care of thy flock thou knowest. For what was torn by the wild beast or stolen by the robber, I repaid thee. For thy flock's sake I was burned with the sun and chilled with the frost, and passed toilsome days and sleepless nights. Well thou knowest that had not the fear of the God of my fathers, who is with me, held thee back, thou wouldst have sent me home penniless!"

For a moment even Laban was shamed. "What use for us to quarrel," he said, "since we are all of one blood? Let us make an agreement, and part." Then they piled up a cairn there in Gilead, and the two companies ate and drank upon the cairn. And they named it Mizpah, "Watch-tower": "For," said the older cheat to the younger, who had overreached him in the end, "may God watch between us two when we are absent one from the other; and may God judge between us if we harm one another." And indeed it might seem that both of them needed a watcher and a judge!

Next morning Laban kissed his daughters and their children, and blessed them; and the two parties took their different ways, never to meet again.

The Return

As the vision of God had come to Jacob when he went out from the Land of Promise, so visions of God were to greet him as he returned. For, as they camped one night in Gilead, he was aware that his camp was not the only one. All around his tents were companies of bright angels, such as he had seen on the golden stairway in his vision at Bethel. Then said he, "Let this place be called 'Mahanaim, 'Two Hosts,' since God has sent His host to keep watch and ward over mine." But still his heart was heavy at the thought of that ancient wrong that he had done to his brother, and he dreaded the hour when he should meet with Esau.

Therefore he sent messengers with greetings to the wild hunter, where he dwelt in Mount Seir of the southland, and besought his grace; but when they returned they brought no answer save

this—"Behold thy brother cometh to meet thee, and with him are four hundred men." At that word Jacob was sore distressed, for he judged the heart of Esau by his own heart, stubborn and unforgetting. So he divided his company, with his flocks and herds and camel-train, into two bands; that so, if Esau should destroy the one, the other might escape. Then falling on his knees, he prayed to Jehovah. "O God of my fathers," he said, "who didst command me to return unto this land, behold, I am not worthy of all the mercy which Thou hast shewed me; for, when I passed this river Jordan before, I was a helpless wanderer, with no possession but my pilgrim's staff, and now I have become two bands. Save me, I pray Thee, from the vengeance of my brother Esau, for I fear him, lest he slay me and my dear ones. Lord, hast Thou not promised to be gracious unto me, and to make my household in number as the sands of the sea-shore?"

That night he camped where he had prayed, and from his flocks and herds he chose a noble present of goats and sheep, camels and kine and asses. These he divided into three droves, and bade his herdsmen drive them onwards with a space betwixt drove and drove. When they met Esau they were to tell him that this was a gift from his brother; that so his anger might be appeased before they two should meet face to face. So he did his utmost to make his peace with Esau, and when all was ordered, he sent his household across the ford of Jabbok; but he himself remained alone on the hillside to watch and pray.

Now, as he watched, he was suddenly aware of a presence at his side. Swiftly he closed with the stranger, and there in the darkness they two wrestled and strove with one another till the night was almost past. Then as the first rose of dawn appeared, his adversary touched Jacob's thigh with his hand, and lo! the hip-joint was loosed at the touch, and Jacob felt it give beneath him. Yet even so, crippled as he was, he still clung to the strange wrestler. "Let me go," said his adversary, "for the day breaketh." But Jacob sobbed, "I will not let Thee go, unless Thou bless me," for now he knew with Whom he had contended. Then said the stranger, and His voice was changed, "What is thy name?" "Jacob, 'Supplanter,'" he said. "Thou shalt be called

no more 'Supplanter,' but 'Israel,' 'Prince of God,' for thou hast striven with God and with men and hast overcome."

"Tell me, I pray Thee, Thy name," said Jacob. "What need to ask it?" came the answer; and Jacob asked no more. Then the great Unknown raised His hand and blessed the weary man and vanished. Then said Jacob, "This place shall be called Peniel, 'Face of God,' for I have seen God face to face, and yet I live." Yet his midnight wrestle left its mark upon him. Down the hillside he came to his company in the morning light; and they who watched his coming saw him limping like a cripple. And cripple he remained to his dying day,—a token of remembrance.

Now came the moment, long foreseen and dreaded, when the two brethren who had parted in bitter anger must meet again. Far in the distance Esau and his troop appeared, coming swiftly along the hill-path; and the sunlight gleamed upon four hundred spears behind the chief. Jacob ranged his household to meet his brother, keeping behind all the rest those who were dearest to him, Rachel, and her son Joseph. Then he himself went forward, and seven times he made salaam and bowed himself before his brother. But from Esau's open, careless heart the anger had long since fled. No thought of vengeance had he; only he saw the brother whom he had not met for twenty years. The fierce sheikh sprang from his camel and cast his strong arms round Jacob's neck, and the two brethren kissed each other and wept for joy.

Their greeting over, Esau looked around. "And these—" he said, as he saw the women and the children, "who are they?" "They are the children whom God hath given thy servant." And all drew near and bowed before Esau. "But what," he said, "was the meaning of those droves that I have met?" "They were for thee, my brother, that I might find favour in thy sight." "Nay, brother," said the generous hunter, "I have enough of my own; keep what thou hast for thyself." But Jacob would not be denied. "Let thine acceptance of my gift be the pledge of thy forgiveness to me; for the sight of thy face has been as God's mercy to me, since thou art gracious. Keep the gift; for Jehovah hath prospered me, and I have plenty." And Esau yielded.

Indeed he would fain have journeyed in company with his

brother, sending his spearmen ahead to guard the way; but Jacob pled that his slow flocks could not keep pace with the swift riders of the wilds. Nor would he even accept a guard from his brother. "What need?" he said. "All shall be well, now that we are met in peace." So Esau and his troop passed on southwards to their mountain home, and Jacob and his slow-travelling herds crossed the Jordan and journeyed westwards till they came to Shechem, in the north country of Palestine, and there they abode for a season.

Thus Jacob came back from his wanderings, he and the children whom God had given him. Eleven stout sons he had, Reuben, Simeon, and Levi; Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun; Dan, Naphtali, and Gad and Asher, and his best-loved, Joseph, the son of Rachel; and besides these he had one fair daughter, Dinah, whose lot was to be one of sorrow and shame. And when he grew prosperous, and God weened that he was forgetting the covenant he had made with Heaven, there came a command to him bidding him go from Shechem to Bethel, where he had first met with God as he fled from Esau's anger. So Jacob gathered all the evil things that were in his house, the fetishes that Rachel had stolen from Laban, the charms in which Leah trusted, and many other foolish vanities, and he buried them all under a great oak at Shechem.

At Bethel, he built an altar to Jehovah, and there he lost one whose presence had ever been a memory of the past. His mother, Rebekah, had died while he was in exile; but Deborah, her old nurse, who had come with her from Harran, came back to dwell with the son of her dead charge. Now, in old age, she too passed away, and Jacob called the oak that marked her grave "The Oak of Weeping," for his heart was sore.

From Bethel they journeyed on once more, and on the way there fell upon Jacob the bitterest sorrow of his life. For as they drew near to Ephrath, their journey was checked; and in their camp Rachel bore her husband a second son. But birth brought death along with it. As she lay dying, she asked to see her little one. "Call him 'Ben-oni,' 'Son of my sorrow,'" she said, and her spirit passed away. Yet, even in his grief, Jacob could not call his son by so ill-omened a name. "Let him be called 'Benjamin,'

'Son of the Right Hand,' " he said, as though this little one should be to his father the strength and comfort that the dead Rachel had been. So Rachel was buried there near to Ephrath, and her husband reared a pillar by her grave. And in the after days the name of Ephrath was changed to Bethlehem; and there, in the fulness of time, was born a greater than Benjamin, the Man not of Jacob's but of God's Right Hand.

Now the time came for Jacob's company to journey southwards, back to Mamre, where Abraham had camped in days long past. For Isaac, his father, still dwelt there, blind, bereaved, lingering on in extreme age. But the call had come for him at last, and Jacob journeyed to see his father once again before he died. Thither, too, came Esau from his eastern fastness, and the two brethren met for the last time by the death-bed of the gentle old man to whom they had caused such sorrow by their strife. So at last, with that peace around him which he had ever loved, Isaac died; and his sons bore him to the cave of Machpelah, and laid him beside his father Abraham, and his mother Sarah, and Rebekah, his wife.

The last link with the old order was broken. Esau passed homewards to his own wild life in the eastern hill country; and for Jacob there were coming changes greater almost, and stranger, than aught that his chequered life had yet seen.

(10) THE STORY OF JOSEPH AND HIS BRETHREN

The Dreamer

NOW among all the twelve sons of Jacob, there were two whom the old man loved beyond the others, because they were the sons of his dead love, Rachel. Benjamin, the youngest, at whose birth Rachel had died, was still only a child; but Joseph, his elder brother, was a bright lad of seventeen, and Jacob could not help showing that Rachel's first-born was more to him than any of his other sons. Indeed he showed his preference in a foolish way, and one that cost them both dear in the end, for

MEETING OF JACOB AND ESAU.
(Genesis, xxxiii.)

he clothed Joseph in a long, sleeved tunic of rich stuff. Now, in the East in those days this was the kind of dress worn by those whose lot it was to do no work, but to have others toil for them; and when his elder brothers saw Joseph going about clad like a young prince, while they wore the short, sleeveless tunics of men who have to work hard for their living, they hated him in their hearts, for they saw that he was destined to be their lord and master.

Neither did Joseph make it any easier for them to love him, for his mind was so full of his coming greatness that he dreamed about it, and told his dreams to his brothers and to his father. "Behold," he said once, "in my dream last night, we were binding sheaves in the harvest-field, and my sheaf rose and stood upright, and your sheaves stood round about and bowed before my sheaf." And his brothers saw plainly what the dream meant, and they said in scorn, "So you are to be our master?" and they hated him yet more in their hearts. Then in his boyish pride, he told another dream. "Behold," he said, "I dreamed once more, and lo! the sun, and the moon, and the eleven stars bowed down before me." Now this was yet plainer than the first dream, for the sun must needs be his father, Jacob, and the moon his step-mother, Leah, and the eleven stars his eleven brethren. So even Jacob had to reprove Joseph for his pride; yet in his heart he believed all the same that his son's dream would come true.

Now it so fell out that, as the season drew on, Jacob's flocks had to change pasturage, and the ten elder brothers went with them, north from Hebron to Shechem, almost fifty miles away. After a time Jacob wished to hear how his sons and their flocks were faring; so he sent Joseph as his messenger, and the boy, proud, no doubt, of his first free journey, trudged the long miles along the mountain ridge to Shechem, only to find that his brothers had gone about fifteen miles farther north to Dothan. So he went on, another day's march, and found them at last near Dothan.

Now when they saw the slim young figure coming down the hillside towards them, and recognised the long robe, the hated sign of favour, which he wore, all their evil thoughts rose up anew in their hearts, and they said, "Lo! here comes this Lord of

Dreams. Let us kill him and bury him in a pit; and we can say to his father, 'A wild beast devoured him,' and that will be an end of him and his dreams." Nevertheless, his brethren were not all so cruel-hearted. Reuben, the eldest, would not agree to kill him; yet neither was he bold enough to resist their evil will altogether. "Let us throw him," he said, "into this dry cistern here beside us, so that we may not have to shed his blood." He meant to return and rescue Joseph when the others had gone on, but in this, as you shall hear, he was foiled. So they stripped Joseph of the fine robe that had cost him so dear, for they had a wicked use for it; and these hard men lowered him into the dry cistern, and they sat down beside it and ate their mid-day meal. But Reuben could not eat with his brother's cries in his ears, so he made an errand to the fold, with the intent to return after the others had gone.

But it so fell out that, before they were ready to move forward with the flocks, they saw in the distance a band of travellers. As they drew near they proved to be Ishmaelites, merchants from Gilead on the eastern side of Jordan, journeying down the trade road to Egypt with sweet-smelling gums and spices. And when Judah saw them another evil thought sprang up in his mind. "Why," said he, "should we slay our brother and make nothing by it, when we can sell him to these strangers and make money by him?" So they all agreed, and the merchants were ready enough to buy a young, active lad as a slave. Joseph was drawn up out of the cistern and sold for twenty pieces of silver; and the caravan jogged off down the long road to Egypt, mile after mile of the very same road that Joseph had trodden a few days before, until at last they turned westwards to the desert track that leads by the sea-coast, and the poor boy got his last look at the hills of home. Indeed, it seemed as though an end had come to his dreams; but God meant otherwise.

Meanwhile, when Reuben came back and found that his brother was gone, and that his good intentions had been foiled, he was in despair, for he knew not how to face his aged father; but his harder brethren formed a cruel plan. They slaughtered one of their flock. Then they took that unlucky robe of Joseph's and dipped it in the blood, and when they came home, they shewed

their father the blood-stained garment, and asked him (with such an evil sneer as you may imagine) if this were his son's coat or no. Poor Jacob knew it only too well, and believed just what his hard-hearted sons wished him to believe. "It is my son's coat," he said. "An evil beast hath devoured him. Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces." Then in sign of mourning he tore his own robes, and clad himself in coarse, dark cloth, and lamented bitterly. And when his sons, hypocrites as they were, tried to comfort him, he had ever but one answer, "I will go down into the grave mourning for my son."

But while Jacob wept, and his sons gloated over the success of their plot, Joseph had passed the desert and entered the wonderful land where all his dreams were to come true. The merchants' caravan came to the great city of Avaris, where the Egyptian king, the Pharaoh, held his court, and there in the slave-market Joseph was sold to a great lord of Egypt named Potiphar, captain of the royal body-guard.

The Slave

It so happened that when Joseph was sold to Potiphar, the King of Egypt and all the chief men of the state and the army were not native Egyptians by blood, but were of the same family of nations to which the Hebrews belonged. Their race had conquered Egypt long before, and they ruled over the land for many years, though now their rule was drawing near its close. And therefore I suppose Joseph all the more readily found favour in his master's sight, because he came of the same stock as himself. But, besides that, the young slave had a way of winning people's hearts. He was handsome, and clever, and willing; and before long Potiphar made him, young as he was, steward of his household, and he did his work so well that everything prospered with him.

But it fell out that his master's wife, in the wickedness of her heart, tried to tempt Joseph to a great sin; and when he refused to listen to her, she slandered him to her husband, and accused him of the very wickedness which he had refused to commit. So once again Joseph's good fortune seemed to have deserted him, for his master believed the accusation and threw him into prison. Yet

even there God took care of him, and his own fine spirit stood his friend; for the chief gaoler soon found that no one was so useful to him as this young Hebrew prisoner, and before long Joseph was managing the prison, as he had managed Potiphar's house.

After a time it came about that two new prisoners were brought into the prison, and these were prisoners of state. They were the chief butler and baker of the royal court—no common servants, but great barons of the realm, who held two of the most important offices of state; for in their hands every day lay the life of the Pharaoh, since they tasted all the food and wine that was set before His Majesty, lest their master should be poisoned by evil men. In some fashion they had displeased their king, and in his anger he had cast them into prison for a time.

Now you have already seen what importance men in those days attached to dreams. They believed them to be sent by God, that from them men might learn the future, and so they were very studious to know what each dream might mean. So one morning, when Joseph came in, as he was wont, to attend upon the two new prisoners, he saw that both looked sad and anxious; and when he asked the reason of their sadness, they answered that they had each dreamed a dream, and each was puzzled as to the meaning of his dream. "Truly," said Joseph, "only God can tell the meaning of dreams; yet tell me what you have dreamed."

Then the chief butler spoke. "In my dream," he said, "I saw a vine with three branches, and, even as I looked on it, behold, it budded and blossomed, and the grapes set, and grew, and ripened. And His Majesty's cup was in my hand, and I squeezed the grapes into it, and gave the cup of grape-juice into His Majesty's hand." And Joseph answered: "This is the meaning of your dream: the three branches are three days; and in three days Pharaoh will restore you to your place and your honours, and you shall wait on him and give him the wine-cup as you were wont to do before. But when that happens, remember me, O my lord, and speak for me to the King, that I may be released from this prison. For indeed, I was stolen away from Palestine, and, though I am here in prison, I have done no wrong."

Now when the other great lord, the chief baker, heard how

JOSEPH SOLD INTO SLAVERY.
(Genesis, xxxvii, 25.)

well his comrade had sped with the interpretation of his dream, he also plucked up heart, and said: "In my dream, I had three baskets on my head, and the uppermost one was filled with all kinds of dainties for the King's table. And, behold, the birds came and ate them all out of the basket on my head." Then I think Joseph turned his face away, and spoke slowly and reluctantly. For this was what he had to say: "Again the three baskets are three days. In three days Pharaoh shall cause you to be hanged, and the birds shall eat your flesh from off your bones."

Even as Joseph had said, so it came to pass. For in three days the King's birthday came round, and there was a great feast in the palace. Then, as he feasted, the King remembered his two courtiers in the prison. On the chief butler he had compassion, and gave him back his place again, so that he gave the cup into the royal hand as of old. But the chief baker found no mercy; he was hanged, even as Joseph had forewarned him. Nevertheless, in his joy at getting his honours back again, the chief butler forgot all about the young Hebrew who had foretold his good fortune, and Joseph was still left in prison.

For two years more he lay there. Indeed, what between his service in Potiphar's house and the time of his imprisonment, he had now come to be a man in the prime and strength of life. And then it so happened that one night the King also dreamed a dream. In his dream he stood by the great river Nile, which made Egypt in the beginning, and keeps it ever fruitful. And, as he looked down the bank, behold, seven cattle, sleek and fat, came up out of the stream and fell to grazing in a meadow. Then the King looked again, and lo! seven other cattle came up the bank, as the first seven had done; but these were lean and starved. They came beside the others, and even as Pharaoh looked at them, behold! the seven starved beasts devoured the seven well-fed ones. Yet none could tell that they were fatter for what they had eaten, so lean and hungry they still appeared. So the King awoke, and the dream passed.

Then Pharaoh slept, and dreamed again. This time he stood in a corn-field, and, before his eyes, seven fine, well-filled ears of corn sprang up from one stalk; and while he watched them, seven thin

and blasted ears sprang up beside the well-filled ones, and swallowed them up. And once more the King awoke and the dream passed. But these things troubled his spirit. He was sure they meant something which he ought to know; but though he called all his prudent counsellors and his wizards, not one of them could tell him what the two dreams might mean.

Now, when the chief butler saw them all at a stand, the thought of Joseph and the prison flashed across his mind. He came and bowed before the King, and told him how two years before, when he and his comrade, the chief baker, lay in prison, a young Hebrew prisoner had interpreted their dreams to them, and how to each man it had happened according to this Hebrew's reading of the future.

Then the King sent his guards to bring Joseph to him speedily; and when he had been shaved and dressed in seemly garments (for the Egyptians were scrupulous above all other peoples about cleanliness), he came and bowed himself before the royal throne. Then said the Pharaoh, "I have dreamed a dream, and none can tell me its meaning; but it is told me that you are wise to interpret dreams." And Joseph answered humbly, "It is not in me that the wisdom lies; God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace!"

So the King repeated to Joseph his dreams of the cattle and the ears of corn; and when Joseph had heard them, he answered in this fashion: "His Majesty's dreams both mean the same thing. God hath shewed to His Majesty beforehand what he is going to do. The seven fat cattle and the seven full ears of corn mean that God is going to give to this land seven years of plentiful harvests. And the seven lean cattle and the seven blasted ears mean that after the years of plenty there shall come seven years of famine. So great shall be the dearth that all the stores laid by from the seven plentiful years shall be eaten up, and no one shall remember the time of plenty because of the time of dearth. As for the reason why the dream came in two forms, it is because God meant His Majesty to be very sure that all this will come, and that speedily. Now, therefore, let His Majesty choose him out a wise man to order the affairs of the land, and let him have officers under him who shall collect each year, in the time of plenty, one-fifth

part of the harvest and lay it up in store, so that when the years of famine come there shall still be corn to eat, and the land shall not perish."

Now when Pharaoh and his wise men heard this, they marvelled at the wisdom of the young Hebrew, and they approved all that he said. Moreover the King looked round upon his counsellors and said, "Where can we find so fit a man as this young man to whom God has given His own spirit of wisdom?" Then he turned to Joseph and said, "Since God has shewed you all this and made you so wise, you and none other shall rule my household and all my people; only I myself, when I speak as king, shall be greater than you." "See," he said, "I have set thee over all the land of Egypt," and, so saying, he took off his royal signet-ring and put it upon Joseph's hand, that he might seal all orders with the royal authority. Then he caused him to be dressed in robes of fine, white linen, with a golden collar about his neck. The second chariot of state was given him to ride in, and the footmen who ran before the chariot cried, as he came, "Abrech!"—"Great Lord!"—so that all the people bowed to the ground as he passed.

Then the Pharaoh gave Joseph a new Egyptian name. "Zaphnathpaaneah" he called him, which means "God spake, and he came into life," for he felt that Joseph was God's gift to Egypt. Moreover, he found him a wife of the greatest in the land, even Asenath, the daughter of the high priest of the sun-god at the great, sacred city of On, which the Greeks call Heliopolis, the City of the Sun.

So Joseph became viceroy of Egypt, and all was done in the land according to his commandment. The seven plentiful years came, and the land brought forth great harvests, and of each year's harvest one-fifth part was laid up in great store-houses near by each city and town, so that the whole country was filled with stores against the days of famine.

And in these happy years of plenty, there were born two sons to Joseph and Asenath, his wife. The first he named Manasseh, which means "Forgetting," for he said, "God has made me forget all my misfortunes and my father's house;" but in his heart he could not forget them all the same. When the second baby was

born, he named him "Ephraim," "Fruitful"; because God had so enriched his life in Egypt.

So the dreams of Joseph began to come true, after all, for his sheaf of corn was set upright and his star was high in the heavens. And now the time was coming when the rest of the dreams was to be fulfilled also, when his brethren's sheaves and his brethren's stars were to bow before his.

The Viceroy

Now when seven years had come and gone, there came first one bad harvest, and then another, till all the people of Egypt saw that the famine which Joseph had foreseen was upon them; nor they only, for in all the lands around the people were starving. But now the great store-houses that Joseph's foresight had created and filled were opened, and the corn was served out to the hungry people, so that, while all other countries were in sore need, there was still sufficiency in Egypt. Away in Palestine, Jacob and his sons were in dire straits, and at last one day the old man said to them: "What is the use of sitting here looking at one another till we die? People say there is corn in Egypt: go down there, and see if you cannot buy enough to keep us alive."

So the ten elder brethren travelled with their sacks and their money down the same desert track along which Joseph had gone so many years before, and at last they came to Egypt. Because they were foreigners, they were not served with corn at once, as were the native Egyptians, but were brought before the viceroy, that he might deal with their request. Then they came and bowed to the ground before the great man whom they had last seen as a weeping boy, bound on the pack-saddle of an Ishmaelite camel, but of that they had no thought, nor did they remember a dream of sheaves bowing before another sheaf, or of stars doing homage to another star. But the years had not brought such change to the grown men as to the lad, and Joseph knew his brethren at once, and, as they bowed before him, he remembered his boyish dreams and saw them all come true. Nevertheless, there was no malice in his heart towards them, but only kindness; yet he wished to

prove them, and to see if they were still the same evil men whom he had known as a boy.

Therefore, he spoke sharply to them and accused them of being spies; and when they denied it, and said that they were all brethren, and had one brother still left in Canaan, he said: "By the life of Pharaoh, you shall not leave this place till I have tested your word. You shall send one of your number to fetch your brother from Canaan, and meanwhile the rest of you shall abide here in prison." For in his heart he longed to see Benjamin once more, and took this plan to bring him down to Egypt. So he shut them up in prison for three days; but on the third day he called them all to him, and said: "Lo! I make it easier for you, because I fear God. You shall go home with the corn you need. Only one of you shall stay here in prison till you come back again with your youngest brother, and so prove your words."

Now, when they saw all this trouble come upon them so suddenly, conscience awoke, and they reproached themselves. "This has come to us," they said, "because we were so cruel to our brother Joseph, and would not listen to his prayer for mercy." And Reuben said: "Did I not tell you not to sin against the child? Yet you would not listen; so now his blood is required of you." All this Joseph heard as he stood by; but they knew not that he understood their speech, for he had spoken to them in Egyptian, and his words had been translated by an interpreter. And when he heard it, Joseph's heart was full, and he had to leave their presence. He chose his elder brother Simeon to stay in prison, and sent the rest away. Their sacks were filled with corn, and he had secretly given orders that their money should be put back again, along with the corn, into the mouths of the sacks.

So the brethren went on their way; but when they came to their first resting-place, and one of them opened a sack to feed his ass, behold! there was his money in the sack's mouth. Then they were all perplexed and anxious as to what this might mean. However, they went back to Jacob, and told him all that had happened to them, and how Simeon had been left as a pledge for the coming of Benjamin, and how the money of one of them had been put back into his sack. But when they opened the rest of the sacks, lo! it

was the same with them all. Then Jacob was greatly afraid. "This has been an unlucky journey," he said. "Joseph is long since dead, and now Simeon is as good as dead, and you want to take Benjamin from me." And even though Reuben offered to leave his own two sons as a pledge for the return of Benjamin, the old man would not listen to him. Yet still the famine grew sorer, and Jacob had to face the matter once more. For when he asked his sons to go into Egypt again for corn, Judah replied that they dare not go without Benjamin. He himself, he said, would answer for Benjamin's safety; but without him, he would not go. Only by Jacob's advice they carried a special present for the viceroy and double money with them, in case the return of the money on their last journey should have been a mistake. And in due time they came to Egypt, and were brought before Joseph.

Now when Joseph saw Benjamin, he knew that his brothers had been true to their word, and he longed to be kind to them. Only in the joy of his heart, he would have it all come about in his own way, and at his own time, and in such fashion as to take them unaware. So he summoned them all to dine with him in his great house; but when these country-bred strangers were brought into such a house, they were terrified, and thought that the viceroy meant to make slaves of them. Therefore they spoke to Joseph's house-steward, and told him all about the money, and how they had brought double money to pay all the debt. Then he, knowing what was in his master's mind, spoke comfortably to them, and brought Simeon back to them out of the prison; and at last they came to Joseph's dining-hall, and gave him, bowing low, the present they had brought.

Then Joseph asked after the welfare of the old man, their father, and seeing Benjamin, he said, "Is this the younger brother of whom you spoke to me?" And turning to Benjamin, he said, "God be gracious to thee, my son." But he could say no more, for his heart was full, and he had to betake himself to another room to weep in secret. When he had mastered his feelings, he came back, and the brothers all dined before him; but he dined at a separate table, because, being, as they believed, an Egyptian, he could not eat beside a Hebrew without being defiled. Then, as

they sat at meat, Joseph, as a special mark of grace, sent food from his own table to them all; but, even so, he could not help but show his greater love to his own full brother, Benjamin, for he sent to him five times as much as to the others. Thus they all feasted and forgot their fears.

Now Joseph had given secret orders to his house-steward that when his brethren were ready to return home, he should, as before, put back their money in their sacks of corn; but in Benjamin's sack, along with his money, he was to put Joseph's great drinking cup of silver. So when the dawn came and the new day, they set out on their long march northwards. Then Joseph called his steward. "Up," he said, "and follow them; and when you have overtaken them, say: 'Why have you returned evil for good by stealing my lord's cup, whereby he consults the oracles of God? Verily, ye have done evil in doing this.'" So the steward and his men pursued and overtook them, and spoke roughly to them, even as Joseph had given him command. Then the eleven brethren were filled with amazement; yet they denied the theft, and called the steward to witness how they had brought back again the money that was put into their sacks before. Moreover, they pledged themselves that if one of them should be found to have stolen the cup, he should die, and the rest should be Joseph's bond-slaves. And to this the steward agreed; but when the sacks were unloaded and opened, lo! there in the mouth of Benjamin's sack was found the cup.

Then in sorrow and fear they rent their clothes and went back with the steward to Avaris, and fell on the ground before their brother. And Joseph said unto them: "What is this that you have done? Did you not know that such a man as I could know your crime by art magic?" Then Judah answered: "We have no defence. This is the finger of God. We are all thy slaves." But Joseph said, "Not so—only the thief shall be my servant, and the rest of you can go in peace to your father." Then Judah pled with him. "O my lord," he said, "be not angry with me, lest we be consumed; for you are in the King's place. You know how all this has come about—how you asked if we had another brother, and we told you of this Benjamin, and you said that he must come

with us or we should not see your face again. Then, when we told our father, he would scarce be persuaded to let Benjamin come with us, lest he should perish as Joseph, his brother, perished; for surely his death would break our father's heart. O my lord, how can I go back and tell my father that the lad is not with us? It will kill him with sorrow! And I pledged myself to my father to bring his son back to him! Let me stay as a slave with you, my lord, and let the lad go; for I cannot bear to return without him, and see the breaking of my father's heart!"

Now, when Joseph heard that pleading, which showed so plainly the better heart that had come to his brethren, he could command himself no longer. "Out from me, every man!" he cried to his guards and attendants. Then with loud weeping, so that even the servants in the house could hear his sobs, he said: "I am Joseph. Doth my father yet live?" But, between astonishment and fear, his brethren could not answer him; so he said yet again, "Come near to me, I pray you." And when they came near, trembling, he said: "I am Joseph whom you sold into Egypt. But do not be grieved about what you did, for it was God's will that sent me here before you to preserve life. For we have had two years of famine already, and still there are five more years to come; so it was, in very deed, God who sent me here to save you, and has given me favour in the sight of Pharaoh, and made me ruler of the land. Hasten, therefore, back to Canaan, and tell my father all that you have seen, and all my glory here; and say to him that I wish him to come down to Egypt with all that he has, and I will provide for him, and for you, and for all your households."

When he had said all this, he fell upon Benjamin's neck and kissed him, and then he embraced all his brethren; and they all wept together, for very gladness of heart. In truth, so great was their joy that the fame of it came to the ears of the great King himself, even Pharaoh, and he and all his court were filled with joy because of the joy of Joseph. So the King commanded Joseph to give orders to his brethren to return at once to Canaan and to bring back their father, and all their families to Egypt, that he himself might provide for their well-being in his land. Wagons

THE FINDING OF MOSES.
(Exodus, ü, 5–9.)

were given to them to bring back their households, and provisions also for the journey. Moreover Joseph gave to each of his brethren new clothing; but to Benjamin he gave three hundred pieces of silver and five changes of clothing. And to his father he sent as a gift ten asses laden with all the dainties that Egypt could produce, and ten she-asses laden with corn and bread and meat for the journey.

So at last they were all ready, and passed the desert once more, and came to Jacob with the wonderful news—"Joseph is still alive, and is governor over all the land of Egypt!" But the old man, little wonder, would not believe them. Yet, in the end, when they had given him all Joseph's loving messages, and he had gone out and seen the long train of Egyptian wagons waiting to carry him and his down to Egypt, the truth began to dawn upon him, and he plucked up heart and said: "It is enough. Joseph, my son, is still alive. I will go and see him before I die." In due time, therefore, Jacob and his sons and all that they had made their journey into Egypt. Who so glad as Joseph when he heard that they were drawing near? He mounted his chariot and drove in haste to the eastern frontier to meet them, and when the aged father and the son whom he had deemed dead for so long met at last, they fell in one another's arms and wept for a time without speaking a word. Then Jacob drew back, and looked upon his son, and said only this, "Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, because thou art yet alive."

So Joseph drove on before the slow-moving wagons to tell Pharaoh of the coming of his father and his brethren; and because they were shepherds, he arranged that they should dwell near the eastern border of Egypt, in the land of Goshen, lest the native Egyptians should trouble them. For the desert chiefs who had conquered Egypt and who now ruled over it were, at the first, shepherd chiefs even as Jacob himself was, and, therefore, the Egyptians of native blood hated the very name of shepherd. But for that same reason, Jacob and his sons were all the more pleasing in the eyes of Pharaoh, since they were of the same stock and calling as his own ancestors.

Then Joseph brought five of his brethren, and gave them au-

dience of his royal master, and it pleased Pharaoh to be gracious to them, and to confirm to them the grant of the land of Goshen. Last of all, in the joy of his heart, Joseph brought his aged father before the King. When Jacob came into the royal presence-chamber, the old man lifted his wrinkled hands and blessed the King; and Pharaoh was well pleased, for in those days even royalty reverenced old age, and thought it no shame to be blessed by an old man, how humble soever he might be. So Pharaoh asked Jacob his age; and the old man answered, "My age is one hundred and thirty years; but my days have been few and evil compared with those of my fathers." Then once more Jacob blessed His Majesty, and went forth from the royal presence.

So Joseph gave to his father and his brethren of the best of the land of Egypt in Goshen, even as the King commanded, and they and all that they had settled down in their new home in peace and quietness, under the shield of their brother's strong arm. The five remaining years of famine passed slowly and wearily away; and though the people of Egypt were in sore straits ere all was done, yet Joseph's foresight prevailed, and at last the good years came back again. For twelve years more Jacob lived with his sons in Goshen, and saw and heard the wonder of Joseph's power and wisdom.

Then came the time when the old man knew that his days were numbered. An hundred and forty-seven years he had lived; and now he must face a longer journey than any that he had made. He called the son of his pride to him, and Joseph came. "Swear to me," the old man said, "that thou wilt not bury me here in this strange land. Carry me up out of Egypt; and lay me beside my own at Hebron." And Joseph swore to fulfil his father's wish. By and by he brought his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, that they might get a blessing from the aged saint. When the boys were led in, the old man gathered his last strength and raised his weary frame in the bed. Quietly he talked for a while of the days and the loves of the past. Then he looked at his grandsons with his dim old eyes (did he remember another day when two sons craved a blessing from their blind father?) and said, "Praise to God, my son; I never thought to see thy face again; but the Lord

hath shown me also thy children." So he blessed them, and the wondering boys were led out again.

After them came all his sons, and them, too, he blessed, foretelling to each, with wondrous insight, the lot that should lie before him. One more charge he laid upon them all—to bury him, as Joseph had sworn already, in the cave at Machpelah, where his kindred lay. And so he died.

A mighty mourning was made in Egypt for the ancient chief—even as though he had been a prince of the land. For seventy days they mourned him as he lay embalmed in his painted coffin. Then Joseph and his brethren craved leave of Pharaoh; and together they took their way with the funeral train across the desert and up through the southland, until they came to Mamre. There in the cave of Machpelah they laid him with his own; and they themselves came back to Egypt.

Now when their father was gone, fear fell on the brethren once more, lest Joseph should even yet take vengeance upon them for the past. Together they came and bowed themselves before him, pleading for forgiveness in the name of their dead father. It was a new wound to Joseph that they had so little understanding of his heart, and so little trust in his love; but he comforted and reassured them, and bade them fear no evil.

Many years longer Joseph dwelt in Egypt in peace and honour, even till he had reached the number of years that the men of Egypt count the years of a perfect life, and was an hundred and ten years old. Ere he died his great-grandchildren had sat upon his knees and played around his feet. In his old age he called his kindred to him, as Jacob had called him. "I die," he said to them, "but remember ye! God will visit you and bring you out of this land to the land which He promised to our fathers. Swear to me that when that time comes, ye, or your children after you, will carry up my bones from hence and lay them by the bones of our kin."

So Joseph died, an hundred and ten years old; and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt—to wait the time.

Part III. *Stories of the Making of a Nation*

(1) IN THE HOUSE OF BONDAGE

THE years that followed after the death of Joseph brought many changes, both to the family of Jacob in Goshen and to that ancient land which had given them a welcome and a shelter. For in that pleasant eastern province of the great land of the Nile the Israelites grew fast into a strong and prosperous clan. Seventy souls they were when they came down out of Palestine; but generation by generation their numbers multiplied, until you might count them by thousands. The land around was fair and fertile. Nowhere else in all the world, save perhaps in the other great river-land of Mesopotamia, was there such wealth, such skill in all the arts and crafts of life, or such wisdom as in Egypt; and the sons of the wandering shepherds who had come down at Joseph's bidding out of Canaan were fast being changed into a nation, and were learning the ordering of a nation's life from all they saw around them.

But if they were changing, Egypt herself was changing yet more rapidly. Joseph had not been long laid in his coffin, when the native-born princes of the land began to murmur against the rule of the desert kings who had lorded it over them for so long. Far up the great river, in the city of Thebes, which in after days grew to be one of the mighty cities of the world—"hundred-gated Thebes"—there arose a prince of the ancient race, who cast off the yoke of the outland Pharaoh and sought to free the whole land from its foreign overlords. Then came many years of fierce war, and the struggle swayed up and down the long valley, as success turned to the Theban or to the shepherd princes. The prince, Seqenen-Ra, who led the revolt, was slain in battle; but ever, as the years went on, the Southerners waxed stronger and stronger, and the Outlanders grew feeble.

MOSES AND AARON BEFORE PHARAOH.
(Exodus vii. 10.)

At last they were driven into their great stronghold, Avaris, and beleaguered there. Stubbornly and long they held the strong walls, fighting fiercely in onfalls upon the besieger's camp, and dashing out in warships on the canals around the city; but in the end all was of no avail. Unwillingly they had to loose their hold upon the land, and sullenly they withdrew beyond the deserts from which they had come in the days long gone by. And so it fell out that there arose up a new king over Egypt which knew not Joseph, and many kings after him whose only thought of the men of Israel in Goshen would be that they were friends of the hated outland princes who had been driven forth from the land.

So for generations Israel lived in the shadow, as they had erewhile lived in the sunshine, and were despised and hated where once they had been welcomed. And during these days Egypt became a mighty conquering power, and sent her hosts abroad over Palestine and Syria, even unto the great river Euphrates; and all the nations of the world bowed down before her star, and kissed the ground before her Pharaoh, as before God manifest in the flesh. Now it befell that after many years there came to the throne of Egypt a Pharaoh whose name was Ramses. Ramses the Great men call him still; but great he was not, save in pride and ambition. He was a fierce soldier, and, above all other things, a mighty builder.

Everywhere, throughout the land, he reared vast temples to the gods, and in the pride of his heart he set before them great statues of himself, hewn out of mighty blocks of granite, such as have never been handled by any other men in all the world, either before or since. For the carrying out of these great works he cast his eyes upon the men of Israel in Goshen. They were taken from their shepherding and husbandry and forced to bend their backs to all the bitter labour of Pharaoh's building. Under the burning sun, and the cruel lash of the slave-driver, they moulded bricks, and dragged great blocks of red granite and white limestone and heaved huge stones up the long slopes of earth till they reached their place upon the wall. Two store cities in especial they built for their tyrant, Pithom, the sacred city of Atum, god of the Setting Sun, and Ramses, the name-city of a mighty monarch.

Yet, though many died in these labours and many were broken, not all the cruelty of Pharaoh could minish the numbers of the men of Israel. Indeed it seemed that oppression only made them stronger. Then the cruel heart of the King was shaken with fear, because the number of this race of slaves increased continually; and he sent forth a cruel and wicked command. "Every son of the Hebrews that is born," he said, "ye shall cast into the river, and every daughter ye shall save alive." For so he weened that ere long the race of Israel should be cut off altogether out of the land.

(2) THE COMING OF THE DELIVERER

NOW it happened that in these days of sorrow a child was born in an Israelite household. A fair and noble babe he was, and when his mother looked upon him, she could not find it in her heart to yield her little one to the cruel river. For three months she hid him, and when she dared keep him no longer, she took a little papyrus boat, made water-tight with pitch, and therein she laid her baby, and set the boat in the shallow water among the reeds by the river-bank. And the boy's elder sister Miriam stood near to mark what might befall.

So what befell was this. The fair princess, daughter of the Pharaoh, came forth with her maidens and walked along the river-bank, and as she went she espied the little boat among the reeds. Wondering what might be therein, she had it brought to her; and when she saw the fair babe and heard his cry, her heart waxed hot against her father's cruel law, and she said, "This is one of the Hebrew's children." Miriam was quick to see her chance. Coming forward, she bowed before the princess and said, "Shall I call for thee a Hebrew nurse to nurse the child for thee?" And the princess, doubtless knowing well in her kindly heart the meaning of it all, bade her go. So Miriam went and called her mother, and the princess gave the child into her keeping. "Take this child away," she said, "and nurse it for me, and I will give thee wages."

So the glad mother took her babe, thus strangely given back to her, and nursed him for a season. Then she brought him back to the princess, who took him as her own son, and called his name Moses. In the great College of the Priests, in the City of the Sun, which the Greeks call Heliopolis, and the Hebrews, On, the boy was put to his schooling, and he grew and became wise in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was a mighty man, both in word and in deed, and, as some say, a famous soldier in the army of the tyrant king.

(3) A FALSE START; AND A VISION OF GOD

PRINCE of Egypt though he had become, Moses could not forget that he was a son of Israel first. He had come to forty years, when his heart moved him to go forth among his kindred and see their troubles; so he went out among the builders and the brickmoulders, and ever, as he saw their heavy lot, his anger grew the hotter. Now it fell out that one day in a solitary place he came upon an Hebrew toiling; and the Egyptian overseer lifted his rod and struck the slave. Thereat the anger of Moses flamed up, and glancing quickly around to see that none other was in sight, he slew the Egyptian and hid his body in the sand. But his hasty deed had been noted nevertheless; for next day, when he would fain have allayed a quarrel between two Hebrews, the wrong-doer of the twain answered him: "Who made thee a prince and a judge over us? Intendest thou to kill me, as thou killedst the Egyptian?"

When Moses heard that, he knew that his life was in sore peril, for Pharaoh's rage would be hot against him. Therefore he fled for his life beyond the great frontier wall of Egypt, and southwards into the desert of Sinai. Weary with his journey, he sat and rested by a well-side in the land of Midian. As the evening fell, there came forth to the well the seven daughters of Jethro, the priest of Midian, to water their father's flock; but when they had filled the troughs, some rude churls of shepherds drove the girls away

with their sheep. Moses came to the help of the shepherdesses, and put the boors to flight, and watered the sheep; and when the priest's daughters returned home, they told their father how a strange Egyptian had helped them. "Why have ye not brought the man?" said the old priest. "Call him hither to break bread with us."

So Moses came into the house of Jethro, and dwelt there. By and by the priest wedded him to his daughter Zipporah, and they had a son whom Moses called "Gershom," which means "a stranger here," because he knew that Midian was only his shelter for a while, and not his home.

Many a year he who had been a prince in Egypt dwelt as a shepherd in the land of Midian. Day by day he led the flocks of Jethro to the pastures in the narrow valleys that run up among the splintered cliffs and frowning hills of Sinai. All the time his heart was with his brethren in Egypt, and he thought of their misery and their cruel toil. But a greater than he was thinking of them also; and in His own time God shewed His servant that He remembered the promises which He had made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

It fell out on this wise. Moses had brought the flock of Jethro to a valley in the mighty range of Horeb, and, as he sat in the sunlight, and dreamed of the sorrows of his kindred, he saw, against the burnt rocks of the mountain-side, the flicker of a moving flame. It rose and fell and waved among the branches and leaves of an acacia bush; yet never a branch or a leaf seemed the worse for the fire that licked around them. Then said Moses, "I will turn and see this wonder, why the bush is not burnt." But as he drew near, the voice of God came from the midst of the burning. "Come not near; put off thy sandals, for thou art standing upon holy ground." And Moses knew that Jehovah was in the flame.

He covered his face, for he dared not look upon God; and the Lord's voice spake again. "I have seen the affliction of My people in Egypt, and their sorrows; and I am come down to deliver them, and to lead them out of Egypt into a good land, a land flowing with milk and honey. Come, now, and I will send thee unto

Pharaoh that thou mayest bring forth My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt."

When Moses heard that word his heart sank, for though the stern and cruel Ramses was dead, yet he knew how terrible a thing it was to face any King of Egypt, who held himself to be a god among men. But, spite of his hesitation, God bade him go, and meet with the headmen of Israel, and tell them of God's promise, and urge them to demand from Pharaoh leave to go three days' journey into the wilderness to sacrifice to Jehovah. "I know," said the Lord, "that Pharaoh will not let you go, save by force; but I will do wonders upon him and his land, till he dare not keep you."

Yet in spite of all God's promises, Moses hung back from this great task, pleading one excuse and then another, until the Lord's anger was kindled against him. At last he yielded, and God bade him take Aaron, his brother, as his companion and his spokesman. So Aaron, at God's command, came forth from Egypt and met in the wilderness the brother whom he had not seen for so many years; and together they twain, old men now, both of them (for Aaron was eighty-three, and Moses, eighty), set out for Egypt on their great adventure.

(4) PHARAOH AND HIS SLAVES

NOW when they were come to their brethren, they gathered the headmen of the nation, and told them what God had promised; and the hearts of the people were filled with joy at the thought of deliverance. Then they sought the presence of the mighty King of Egypt. "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel," they said unto him, "'Let My people go, that they may hold a feast unto Me in the wilderness.'" But Pharaoh looked upon them with scorn. "Who is the Lord," he sneered, "that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go." And when the two brethren pled with him, he cried: "Why do ye, Moses and Aaron, hinder the people from their work? Get you unto your burdens." Nav.

so much was his mind set against them, that he bade the overseers withhold from the brickmakers the straw with which they were wont to mix the clay of their bricks, yet ordered that they should not diminish the number of the bricks which they made.

So it seemed that the case of the Israelites was only made the more grievous by the intervention of Moses and Aaron; for now the poor folk had to waste time hunting through the fields for stubble wherewith to bind the clay, yet had to deliver still the same number of bricks as before. The overseers beat the Israelite headmen when the number of bricks fell short, and when they complained to Pharaoh, he mocked them. "Ye are idle, ye are idle. Go and work." Then the headmen turned upon Moses and Aaron. "Sorry helpers have ye been. God judge you, for ye have made us hateful to Pharaoh, and put a sword in his hand to slay us."

Once more the brethren went into Pharaoh's presence-chamber to plead for their kindred. Pharaoh sat upon his throne, with his wise men and magicians around him, for ever the Egyptians had great trust in art magic. The King jeered at the two suppliants. "Shew us a wonder," he said. Then said Moses to his brother, "Cast down thy rod before the King." Lo! as the rod fell, it changed into a serpent, rearing its fiery crest and wreathing its coils before the very face of the lord of the Two Lands. But Pharaoh gave a sign to his wise men, and by their black art and illusion it seemed that their rods became serpents also. Yet even so the victory was with the Hebrew brethren, for the rod of Aaron darted upon the other rods and devoured them. But even this did not move the stubborn King.

Now it befell that with the morning light the King went forth with his priests and his wise men to the river-bank to worship the great god Hapi (for so the Egyptians name their god of the river Nile). And as he came, behold, between him and the river stood the two stern Hebrew brethren, proffering their old request. And when Pharaoh rejected it once more with scorn, Moses spake a word to Aaron, and the elder brother lifted his rod and smote the shining water of the river. Lo! in that moment the great Nile flowed dark, and heavy, and horrible, a crimson stream of blood.

No man could drink of the river, the fish died, and over the whole land there hung the dreadful smell of blood. For seven days the horror endured, so that men were fain to dig for water in every place; then the plague passed, and the river ran clear.

Again came the word of God to the King—"Let My people go, that they may serve Me"—and again Pharaoh refused to hearken. Then the rod of Aaron was stretched forth over all the waters of Egypt, and, as it waved, there was a sound of croaking and moving, and lo! great companies of loathsome frogs came forth out of every stream and canal and pond in all the land. Upon everything they swarmed, defiling all with their hateful touch. They leaped into the ovens and mixed themselves with the dough in the kneading-troughs; they squatted on the royal bed of Pharaoh himself, till Pharaoh loathed himself. But when he called for his magicians, they could only bring more frogs, and so worsen a plague that was bad enough before.

This time Pharaoh was afraid, as well he might be, at so foul a visitation. "Beg the Lord to take away the frogs," he said, "and I will let the people go." So Moses and Aaron besought Jehovah, and the frogs perished as suddenly as they had come. In huge, filthy heaps of corruption they were gathered together, so that the whole land reeked of their decay. But when Pharaoh saw that the frogs were gone, he hardened his heart, and paid no heed to the Hebrew brethren.

Therefore God smote him and his land with other plagues, grievous and horrible. For first the rod of Aaron touched the dust of the earth, and, behold! all Egypt swarmed with lice, till the very magicians of Pharaoh said to their master, "This is the finger of God." And when still the King would not hearken, there came myriads of myriads of foul flies, blackening the whole land, saving only the land of Goshen, and corrupting everything they lighted on. Thereat Pharaoh made a show of yielding, but only till the plague should be removed. For when the flies were dead and gone, he hardened his heart and became stubborn as before. So there came a very grievous ill upon all the cattle of the Egyptians, their horses, their oxen, their camels, and their sheep, and everywhere throughout the land the innocent beasts suffered and

died because of the hardness of the King's heart. But in the land of Goshen, when Pharaoh sent to make inquiry, it was found that never a beast had ailed.

And when even this was of no effect, Moses stood before Pharaoh with ashes of the furnace in his hand. He cast them up in the face of heaven, and, wherever the wind bore them, sore boils brake out on man and beast, so that neither Pharaoh nor his courtiers might endure to abide in the presence of Moses, by reason of the boils that were upon them. Yet still the heart of the King was hard as ever, and he would not hearken to the voice of God.

Therefore Moses came once again into Pharaoh's audience-chamber, and once again he proffered his request. Solemnly he warned the stubborn King that, if he would not listen to the command of the Lord, all his greatness and glory should only serve, by their humiliation and overthrow, to magnify the name of Jehovah in the earth. "Dost thou still exalt thyself against my people that thou wilt not let them go? Behold, tomorrow about this time I will send a terrible hail such as Egypt has never known since the day it was first made. Gather in thy cattle, therefore, for, if man or beast be caught in the field by the hail, they shall die."

When Pharaoh's counsellers heard that word of ill omen (for hail and rain are strange things in the land of Egypt and seldom seen), some of them were wise and gathered in their cattle and their servants; but some, like their master, believed that the threat of Moses was only an idle word. Then on the morrow Moses lifted his rod towards heaven; and the great clouds gathered, and the lightnings flashed, and the thunders rattled, and there fell upon the cowering land such tempest of hail as Egypt had never known. Naught that was in open field was able to withstand it; plants and cattle and men, all were stricken unto death by that dire archery of heaven. Even the King was cowed for the moment. "I have sinned," he said. "Jehovah is righteous; I and my people are wicked. Entreat the Lord for me, that these mighty thunderings and hail may cease, and I will let you go."

Then Moses went out from the presence of Pharaoh, and spread his hands abroad to heaven; and lo! the hail ceased and the

thunders rolled away to the far horizon, and the clear blue of heaven shone forth once more. But when the King saw that all was bright again, his royal word was nothing in his eyes, as Moses well foresaw. Stubbornly, he refused once more to listen to the command of Jehovah to let Israel go.

Nay, even when Moses brought upon the land the devouring armies of the locust, so that not one green blade or leaf was left in Egypt, not even then would the king bow his pride for long. His courtiers besought him to yield, and told him that Egypt was destroyed; and when he saw the countless myriads of locusts swarming upon the land, and every tree and bush white and ghastly where the devourers had passed, his hard heart trembled for a moment, and he seemed to bow in submission. But scarce had the prayer of Moses brought the west wind that swept the locust armies into the Red Sea, ere he lifted his rebellious head again, and took back his pledged word.

So then there came upon the land a plague, strange, and awful, and spirit-shaking. For there fell, in the midst of the day, a dreadful darkness upon the whole country. It wrapped the land as with a black mantle, till every man felt it weighing upon him and oppressing him like a heavy weight. For three days it hung over all, and in those days no man saw his neighbour, no man went forth from his dwelling; but in the darkened houses all Egypt sat and trembled. Only upon the land of Goshen the black veil did not fall, but there all was light and good cheer.

In sore dismay Pharaoh summoned Moses. "Go, serve the Lord," he said, "you and your children: only your flocks and herds shall be left behind." "Nay," answered Moses, "not a hoof shall be left behind. How shall we have wherewith to sacrifice to Jehovah, unless we take our cattle with us?" Then all the bitterness of Pharaoh's hatred overflowed. "Out of my sight," he cried. "Guard thyself well, and never dare to enter my presence again; for in the day that thou seest my face thou shalt die!" And Moses made grim answer, "Thou hast spoken truly, I will see thy face again no more."

Then in his breast there flamed up also a great and righteous wrath. "Hearken, thou also," he cried, "to the word of the Lord.

On a certain night, about midnight, saith Jehovah, I will go out through the land of Egypt. In that night, all the first-born in the land shall die, from thy son, O Pharaoh, to the first-born of the slave-woman who grinds the corn and the first-born of the cattle in the fields. Such mourning shall there be in Egypt as never yet has been, nay, nor ever shall be again. Thy servants shall come to me beseeching me and my people to go forth from the land and when thy pride has been humbled in the dust I will go out." In hot anger Moses left the presence-chamber; and behind him the furious King rallied his courage and doggedly awaited the issue of the strife.

Now, in the hush that fell before the coming of the storm, Israel made ready. For Moses bade them remember that, when Pharaoh's pride was broken, their freedom would come suddenly. So each household asked of its Egyptian neighbours a tribute of gold or silver for the service of Jehovah, and the Egyptians were ready to give, for their heart was not with their king, but with the men of Israel in this long strife. And in especial, Moses had come to great honour in the minds even of Pharaoh's counsellors, and was held by them to be a mighty chief.

So the days dragged on, heavy with doom. On the tenth day of the month, Abib, which men now call April, each household in Israel chose for itself a yearling lamb or kid, without blemish. For four days they kept it. Then when the fourteenth day of the month came, and the Full Moon rose in the east as the sun was sinking in the west, the sacrificial lamb was slain. Its blood was gathered, and, dipping therein a bunch of hyssop, each householder marked the side-posts and the lintel of his door with a blood-red stain. Within the blood-marked door, all was made ready. The lamb was roasted, and, as the darkness came, all the family gathered around the table and feasted. A strange feast it was; for they ate as if in haste, standing with their garments girt close about them, like wayfarers, and each with his pilgrim staff in his hand. And with the flesh of the sacrifice they ate unleavened bread and bitter herbs.

Then they waited, and none moved out of doors. The bright moon climbed the sky till she reached her midnight southing, and

suddenly there sounded on the night air a dreadful cry. It came from every side. It sounded in Pharaoh's great, white palace, and echoed in the houses of his courtiers and his priests; it rose and gathered in the narrow streets of the mighty city, and swept from lonely house to lonely house in the far fields. When the children of Israel heard it they trembled, even in their security; for they knew that the angel of the Lord was passing in the cold moonlight over the length and breadth of Egypt, and that in all the land, save in their homes, there was not a house where there was not one dead. But, as for themselves, the stain of the blood upon door-post and lintel had been a sign to the destroying angel, and Death had passed over the homes of Israel and left them unscathed.

Pharaoh rose up from beside his dead and sent his messengers to the Hebrew brethren. "Get you gone," was their message, "you and all the children of Israel, and serve your God as you will. Take with you your flocks and herds and begone. Yet bless me also!" From every Egyptian house and hamlet, the sobbing people crowded round the men of Israel. "In God's name begone," they cried, "before we all are dead!" So, from all the land around, the Hebrews gathered in to their trysting-place by the city of Ramses, and under the April moon they marched forth—a free people.

Four hundred and thirty years they had dwelt in that wondrous land, since the day when Jacob and his sons came down to Goshen, and now they went out on the self-same day in which they had first set foot in Egypt. Henceforward that April month became to them the beginning of their year, and all their seasons were reckoned from it. Moreover, since by the first-born of Egypt had Israel been set free, and by the first-born of the flock had Israel been preserved, it was ordained that the first-born of man and of beast should be given for ever to the Lord. And from that time each first-born child of Israel was redeemed by a price which was given to the High Priest of Jehovah. Above all, year by year, through the whole story of Israel, the feast that had been held on that night of awe was repeated in each Hebrew home. The Feast of the Lord's Passover it was called, because on that night the angel of the Lord had passed over the houses of the children of Israel, when he went forth to slay throughout the land of Egypt.

(5) THE GREAT DELIVERANCE

YOU can picture the mighty gathering beyond the walls of that city which the men of Israel themselves had built with sore labour and travail for their oppressor. Old men and women bowed with long years of serfdom, fathers and mothers in the midst of their days, young men and maidens rejoicing in the new light of freedom that had dawned upon them, little children, wondering in themselves what might be the meaning of all the stir, but glad to have a new excitement—all were gathered together for the march. Even in the haste of their departure the ancient pledge to Joseph was not forgotten, and the painted coffin of the dead viceroy was borne in the midst of the host. With them went all their flocks and herds, and on every side was the lowing of cattle and the bleating of sheep. With them, too, went a crowd of aliens—foreigners who could not thrive in Egypt, slaves eager to be free, and such feeble folk as ever follow the star of success—and this scum and froth of many nations proved of great trouble to the Hebrews in the after days.

Eastwards they marched from Ramses to Succoth. It had been nearer to have journeyed by the shore of the Very Green Sea, that which men now call the Mediterranean, and so up the great coast-road into Palestine, but the Lord in His wisdom ordered otherwise. For a race of men from the Isles of the Sea had settled of late in the coast-land of Palestine. Mighty men of war they were, and God judged that His people should not face as yet the hazard of conflict with such foes. So He led the Hebrews towards the upper end of the Red Sea, till at last they came to the great castle of Etham that guarded the southern end of the frontier wall of Egypt. Beyond them lay the desert and liberty; but the Lord suffered them not to storm the wall. Instead He led them southwards ever, going before them in a pillar of dusky cloud by day, and a pillar of red fire by night. He led them to a reedy shore with an outpost watch-tower looking upon it from the hills

behind. In front rolled the shallow upper waters of the Red Sea, and on the farther shore rose Baal-zephon, "the Mountain of the Lord of the North."

Now Pharaoh's guards in the watch-tower sent swift riders to the King, telling him of the wandering host that was camped between the tower and the sea; and Pharaoh knew that it was the Hebrew host—his aforetime slaves. King and people, stunned at first and overwhelmed by the death of the first-born, were beginning to take heart again, and to deem that they had been hasty and craven in yielding to the Lord's command. "Why did we let them go?" they said. "Now we have none to serve us." So when the messengers came, and Pharaoh learned that Israel lay helpless, as it seemed, between the sea and the desert, his heart was glad. Swiftly he summoned his captains, and bade them gather all the chariots of the Egyptian host to pursue. Foremost he set a picked brigade of six hundred chariots, with the swiftest horses and the stoutest archers in them; and in hot haste he and his men set forth after their slaves.

The motley camp of the Hebrews lay along the sea-shore, and evening was falling, when between the fugitives and the setting sun there rose on the far horizon a cloud of dust. Higher and higher it rose, and now the sentries of the camp could catch the glitter of spearheads and of mail. Then came the dull rumble of many chariot-wheels and the clatter of harnessed warriors as the light chariots jolted over the rough ground. It was the Egyptian host pursuing, and the hearts of the men of Israel melted for fear. Angrily they turned upon their leader—"Were there no graves in Egypt, that thou hast brought us to die in the wilderness? Did not we say to thee in Egypt, 'Let us alone that we may serve the Egyptians'? Better to serve Egyptian lords than to be slaughtered in the desert."

Boldly Moses answered them: "Fear not, but stand fast, and see the salvation of God. See ye these Egyptians today? Ye shall see them again no more. For the Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall be silent." But indeed his own soul trembled at the fearful hazard in which his people stood, between the sea and the foe, and he sought the help of the Lord. This was his answer: "Wherefore

criest thou unto Me? Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward." Then the angel of the Lord turned from the van of the host of Israel and stood as rear-guard between them and the Egyptians, and the pillar of the cloud came with him. It was all dark on the side next the Egyptian pursuers, so that, when the sun had set, the cloud hid the Full Moon from them, and they groped and stumbled in the darkness; but it glowed with unearthly light on the side next the Israelites so that they saw clearly.

Then Moses stretched out his hand seaward and a mighty wind came roaring up from the east, and before its blast the shallow waters of the sea were driven, until a broad stretch of bare sand lay from shore to shore before the men of Israel. Down that strange pathway they marched, tribe by tribe, household by household, with the foaming waters roaring in baffled rage on this side and on that as they passed. All night long, under the light of the Passover Moon, the stream of life flowed across the sands, and the morning light saw the last of their rear-guard step to the eastern shore.

But the pursuers had no thought of letting their prey escape so lightly. Pharaoh gave command, and his chariots filed before him, as he stood on the African shore, and drove down the path between the watery walls, where their slaves had gone before. Then, as the morning broke, a breath of dread passed over the long column of toiling chariots. The deep sands sucked down the wheels, and, as the frightened horses plunged and tugged to free them, axles broke and wheels were splintered, till the warriors of Egypt turned to flee. "Jehovah fights for Israel against Egypt," they cried.

It was too late for flight. Moses stretched forth his hand again, and, as the sun arose, the wind whirled round into the west. Back swept the angry waters, loosed from their restraint, and beneath them all the chosen chivalry of Egypt found a grave. So Pharaoh, who had thought to avenge his shame upon a helpless people, learned what it means to fight against God, and turned from that shore of death, a broken man, to his desolate home. On the eastern beach the rising waves were tossing shattered chariots and

stark corpses; and the men of Israel looked their last on the dead faces of their tyrants, and knew that they were free.

Then with songs and dances the ransomed nation gave praise to God who had delivered them; and the great chorus rolled from the men, ranked on the one side, to the women on the other:

> "*Sing ye to the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously:*
> *The horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea.*"

So Israel went out from the House of Bondage, to journey through the desert to the Promised Land.

(6) A PILGRIM NATION

NOW the Lord was minded not to lead His people straight across the desert to the Land of Promise, but to make their journeying a time of discipline and training, so that, when they reached their heritage, they might be fit to possess and rule it. Therefore He led them southwards into that nook of tumbled rocks and splintered hills that is called Sinai, that there He might teach them of Himself and of His will. And on their way thitherward there befell them strange happenings and adventures, as shall now be told.

For three dreary days they journeyed over burning, flint-strewn marl, and never a spring could they find. At last there was a gleam of water in the distance, and all hastened their march, dreaming of cool shade and refreshing draughts. But when they bowed them down to drink, lo! the water was bitter to the taste; and in their disappointment the weary, thirsty folk cried out against their leader who had brought them to such a spring. "Marah," "Bitterness," they called it in their vexation. Then Moses made his prayer to the Lord, and a certain tree was shown him, and when he had cast it into the spring the waters became sweet, and the people drank and were refreshed.

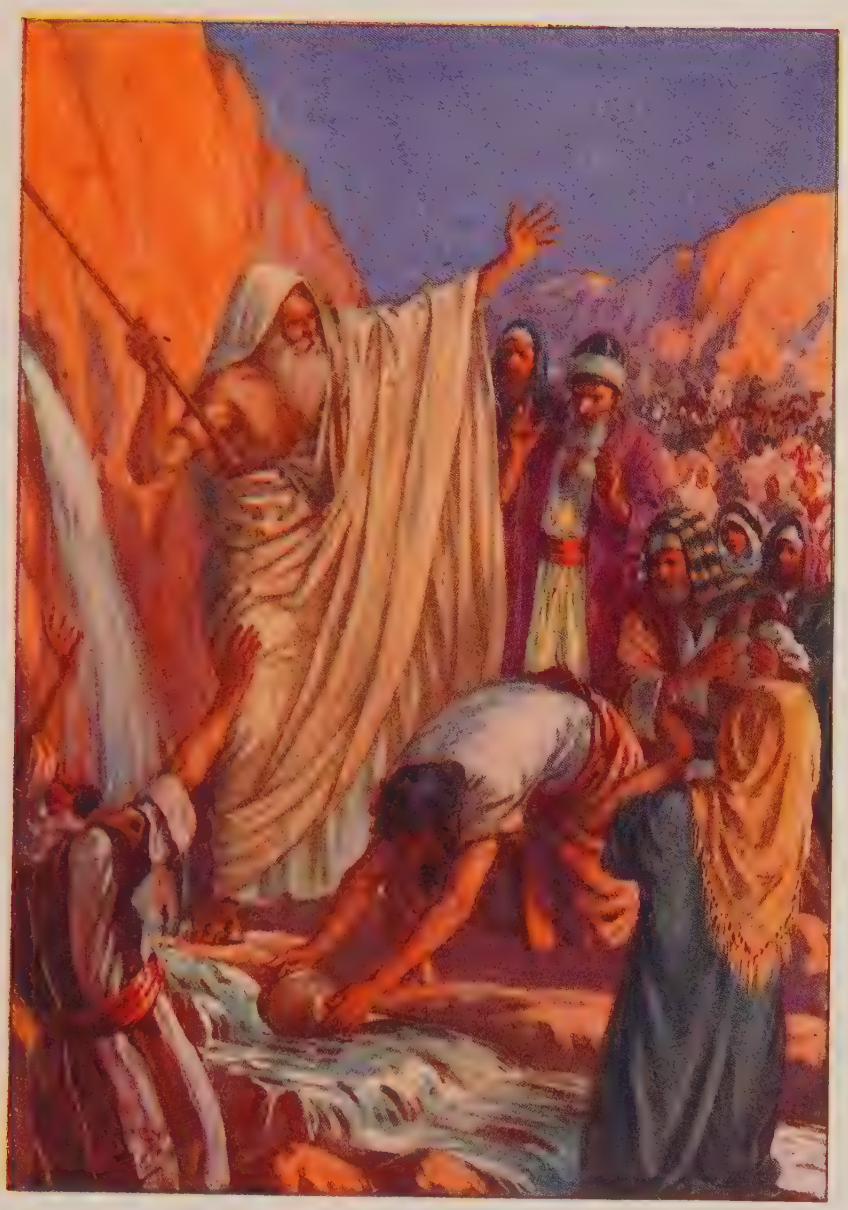
Striking camp, they journeyed from Marah one short stage, and then, winding down a narrow valley among low hills, they

came into the valley of Elim. Here was a sight to gladden eyes weary of desert sands and cloudless glare of sunshine. Palm-trees waved their feathery crests in the air and cast a refreshing shade, tamarisks grew thickly, and everywhere was green foliage and bloom and scent. Down the midst of the valley babbled a clear, strong stream fed from twelve well-springs. So, in the coolness of this happy valley, the wanderers rested and were glad.

Then came a stage that brought back memories of the past, for their journey brought them down from the fair vale of Elim to the sea. There, beyond the tossing blue waters, lay the long range of hills that borders Egypt on the east. Black and grim their crests stood out against the red, westering sun. So the people looked their last upon the House of Bondage, and remembered their affliction only as waters that pass away.

But now for a season their way led through the barren wilderness of Sin. Naught grew there to feed the wayfarers, and the food they bore with them soon was done. Then fierce murmurings broke out against their leaders. "Would that God had slain us in the land of Egypt, where, slaves or no, we had plenty to eat. Ye have brought us out into this waste to kill a whole nation with hunger." Then Moses spoke sharply to the people (for he was grieved at their senseless ingratitude), and sent Aaron to bid them draw near before the Lord. And when the people looked towards the wilderness, lo! the light of God shone in the pillar of the cloud, and they knew that Jehovah was there. And the Lord gave His word to Moses—"This evening ye shall eat flesh, and in the morning ye shall have bread to the full; so shall ye know that I am God."

Then as the sun set, a vast cloud of quails flew up and settled around the camp, and the people slew and ate. That night there fell a heavy dew on all the earth about the tents of Israel; and when the dew had vanished as the sun climbed high, behold! all the desert sands were covered, as it were with hoar-frost, with a small, round grain. When the people saw it they marvelled. "Manna? What is it?" they said. And Moses answered them: "This is God's gift of bread to you. Let each man gather of it in the morning (for it melts before the sun), as much as is needed for



MOSES STRIKING THE ROCK.
(Exodus, xvii, 5–7.)

his household. Let no man gather more than he needs, to lay it up in store." Yet in spite of his commandment, some greedy souls among the people thought to gather more than they could eat, and save it against another day; but when they went to use it the next morning, it was loathsome and corrupt. No manna (for so they called it henceforth, remembering their first question) fell upon the seventh day; but on the sixth each household gathered a double supply, and what they stored for the Sabbath remained fresh and sweet. Yet, even so, some stubborn souls among the people must needs go out on the Sabbath to gather as they were wont; but they came back empty-handed, and earned nothing but the rebuke of the Lord.

So in this wondrous fashion was Israel fed through all the forty years of the nation's wanderings in the desert. Never did the manna fail them until they had reached the Land of Promise. It was a white, seed-like thing, sweet to the taste, like thin cakes sweetened with honey. And in memory of this great wonder, a vessel of the manna was laid up in store among the holy things of the nation, that it might ever be a witness of the goodness of God.

Now, at God's command, Moses led his people up out of the burning wastes of Sin into the foot of the long valley that runs up to the foot of the great mountain mass of Sinai. Feiran, men call it now, but in those days the name of it was called Rephidim. The upper valley was fair and fertile, with shady trees and a pleasant stream tinkling through the greenery—a haven of rest and beauty, girt in by wild, thunder-riven rocks that lift, on every hand, splintered pinnacles of fantastic shape and colour. But in the lower valley all was bare and desolate, for the upper stream exhausted itself before it could reach the lower levels. So once again the senseless clamour of reproach broke out. Moses had brought a nation up out of Egypt merely to kill them, by thirst this time. In his need Moses cried to God, and he was bidden to stand before a rock in the lower valley, holding in his hand the rod wherewith he changed the waters of the Nile, while the whole nation was gathered before him. Then, lifting the rod, he smote, as God bade him, upon the iron face of the rock; and lo! a spring of fresh water burst forth, and the stream ran down the valley

gurgling and foaming, and the people drank and were satisfied. Yet, to show his anger at the foolish murmurs of the people, Moses marked the place with names of evil significance. "Massah and Meribah," "Provocation and Strife," he called it, that so, with the memory of God's bounty, should go the memory of a people's folly.

Now the men of the tribe of Amalek had their home in the fair upper valley of Rephidim, and they were by no means minded to yield it to this horde of vagabonds which came pressing up from the desert. They girt on their harness and came forth to make a fight for their palm-trees and water-springs. On the side of Israel, Moses chose out a captain, Joshua, the son of Nun, and bade him pick the fittest men to go out to battle. So on the next day the battle was joined in the valley between the towering hills, and all day long the strife swayed back and forth with changing fortune. Moses, with Aaron and Hur, stood on the hill overlooking the battle-field, and so it seemed that ever when Moses raised his hand with the wondrous rod in it, the hearts of the men of Israel waxed stouter, and they drave the men of Amalek before them. But when Moses grew weary and his arm dropped to his side, the tide of battle turned, and the Amalekites thrust the Israelites down the valley. Therefore Aaron and Hur came to Moses, and set him on a great stone; and, standing on either side of him, each one held aloft a hand of the great leader, and kept it fixed and steady. There stood the three, immovable as if graven out of the rock, all the long day of strife. Ever when the panting Israelite lifted his eyes, he saw the hands of his great leader raised as in appeal to Jehovah, or pointing the way to victory.

So, as the red sun sloped westwards, and the shadows grew long across the valley, Israel at last drove Amalek back, with cruel slaughter, and took possession of the fair valley of Rephidim. And on the hill where he had lifted his hands to the God of Battles, Moses built an altar and called it "Jehovah-Nissi," "The Lord My Banner."

In all this time Moses had been severed from his wife and his children. But now when the nation was free and safely camped in Rephidim, there to abide for a season, Jethro, the priest of Midian,

came to their camp, bringing with him his daughter Zipporah, Moses' wife, and her two sons Gershom and Eliezer. Great gladness was between them when they met, and much Jethro marvelled over all the wonders that God had wrought by the hand of Moses. So the old man dwelt with his son-in-law for a season, and then departed to his own home. Yet he left behind him a proof of his wisdom, and did no small service to Moses in his governance of Israel. For, seeing that each man that had a grievance brought it to the leader of the nation, till body and mind were wearied and fretted with the hearing of a multitude of little wrongs and follies, Jethro counselled Moses no longer to waste his strength on such trifles, but to save himself for his true work. "Choose out good and honest men," he said, "and make them rulers, to order the affairs of the people—rulers of tens, of hundreds, of thousands, as it may be. Let them hear the small matters with which thou art vexed at present. Only when the matter is too great for them to judge, let them bring it to thee to determine. So shalt thou be able to endure, and the people shall be ruled in peace."

Jethro's counsel seemed good unto Moses, and so, before the ancient priest of Midian went back to his own home, the lesser judges were appointed, and Israel began to govern itself.

(7) AT THE MOUNT OF GOD

THREE months had come and gone since Israel came out of Egypt, and now the people were camped at the head of the fertile valley of Feiran, under the great Mount whence God was to give them His Law. On either side of the valley rose a wall of mighty cliffs; a sparkling stream babbled down the glen, through groves of palm-trees and green bushes; in front towered the giant mass of the great mountain, Serbal, its cliffs flushed with strange colours, purple, and black, and gold. Now when the camp was pitched before the Holy Mount, the Lord called Moses to Him among the great solitudes of the hill, and to him He gave command that the people should make them ready to receive His Law.

For two days they were to purify themselves. Then on the third day, with clean-washen garments, they were to stand before the mount to hearken to the voice of God. Close to the mount they must be, that all might see and hear; but no man was to touch it, or set foot upon its slopes, on pain of death. The third day dawned; and lo! on the frowning crest of the mountain there hung a great, black cloud, and from the heart of it there brake forth lightnings, and the rolling voice of thunder, and the high, shrill blast of a trumpet, sounding loud and long. Below in the valley the men of Israel trembled for fear; for the mighty rocks before them quivered and shook and sent forth flashes of fire, and the smoke rolled heavenwards from the hill like the smoke of a vast furnace. Once again the Lord called Moses to Him on the mountain-top to bid him warn the people, lest in vain curiosity they should break through the bounds that girdled the mountain and so perish; and Moses did as the Lord commanded him.

Then, from the midst of the dark cloud that veiled the trembling mountain-peak, came the sound of an awful voice. Thus spake Jehovah to His people:

"I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the House of Bondage.

Thou shalt have no other gods before Me.

Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth:

Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I, the Lord thy God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me, and shewing mercy unto a thousand generations of them that love Me and keep My commandments.

Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain.

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work,

thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it.

Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

Thou shalt not kill.

Thou shalt not commit adultery.

Thou shalt not steal.

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbour's."

As commandment after commandment pealed forth from the cloud-wrapt cliff above their heads, in the terror of trumpet blast and lightning and earthquake, the hearts of the people melted within them. In great dread they drew back a space from the mountain, and cried to Moses: "Be thou God's messenger to us. God's words we can hearken to, when thou dost speak them; but let not God Himself speak to us, lest we die." Their leader quieted them and told them that God did not mean to destroy them, but only to test them, that so, having seen His mighty power, they might ever stand in awe of Him, and might reverence Him.

So passed that wondrous day. Early on the morrow Moses arose, and built an altar to the Lord under the face of the cliff whence the thunders of the Law had rolled. It was girt with twelve pillars, one for each of the tribes of Israel, and young men chosen from the tribes made a sacrifice of oxen thereon to the Lord. Half of the blood of the sacrifices Moses laid aside in basins; with the other half he sprinkled the altar. Taking then the roll on which he had written all that God had spoken the day before, he read it aloud in the hearing of the people; and all the men of Israel lifted their hands and made oath: "All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient." So Moses took the remainder

of the blood that he had set apart, and with it he anointed the people. So was there a blood-covenant made between the Lord God and His people Israel, before the Mount of God in Sinai.

To hallow the covenant the Lord bade Moses come up into the mountain, bringing with him Aaron and his sons, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of the nation. And to these men it was given to see somewhat of the glory of the Most High; yet all that they could tell thereof in the after days was that beneath the feet of the Eternal there seemed to stretch a pavement of sapphire, blue as the very vault of heaven itself. Naught of scathe came to them in that Almighty presence; but before the feet of God they ate of the covenant-sacrifice, and so got them down to the people again. But Moses remained upon the Mount of God, shrouded from the eyes of the men of Israel by a shining cloud that seemed to them the very glory of God. For six days he abode there; and then, at last, God spake to him once more out of the glory, and for forty days and forty nights Moses dwelt with God on the mount, learning from communion with Him all the manner in which the children of Israel should serve the Lord, and how they should bear themselves towards one another and towards the men of other races. Many, and wise, and merciful were the laws which God taught to His servant, and Moses wrote them all in the book of the covenant that they might be an ordinance unto Israel to all generations.

(8) THE VISION OF GOD'S DWELLING-PLACE

OW while Moses dwelt within the cloud on the Mount of God, the Lord revealed to him the manner in which He would have His people fashion a place wherein to worship Him. For He bade him speak to the children of Israel, and say to them that they should bring gifts of their best and richest—yet only if they had willing hearts, and not as constrained. Gold, and silver, and brass they were to bring, cloth also, of blue, and purple, and scarlet, fine linen of Egypt, and rough goats' hair cloth, rams'

skins, crimson-dyed, and the skin of the sea-cow that dwells in the warm waters of the Persian Sea, acacia wood, oils and spices, and precious stones of all sorts.

"Let them make Me a Holy Place," said the Lord, "that I may dwell among them." And as He spake, there shone before the eyes of Moses a vision of the Holy Place of Jehovah, as it was to be. It was made in the fashion of a tent, since it had to be struck and pitched with the other tents of the camp, as the people journeyed; but such a tent as no man had seen on earth before, or has seen since.

All glorious it was, without and within, with the glitter of gold and silver and massy bronze, and the rich glow of crimson and purple and blue, and the spotless white of fine Egyptian linen. In the midst of a great court, whose length was an hundred and fifty feet, and whose breadth was seventy and five, rose the tent itself. Flat-roofed it was, and the outer covering of it was of sea-cow's leather dyed blue, the inner, of rams' skins dyed crimson. Within this tent stood the sanctuary. Its walls were of acacia planks overlaid with gold, which stood in heavy sockets of silver; and over the gilded wood, and across the top, stretched curtains of white linen, and of blue, purple, and scarlet cloth, all wrought with cunning embroidery of cherubim. Forty and five feet long, and fifteen feet broad it stood, beneath its outer leathern tent, and four pillars of gilded acacia wood divided it into two parts.

The inner part, which lay westwards, was but one half of the size of the outer, but it was the place of God's dwelling, the Holy of Holies. Another veil of many-coloured embroidery hung from the pillars, and the cherubim broidered on it seemed to guard the entrance against the profane; for into this Most Holy Place might only one man come—God's chosen High Priest—and he but once a year, with blood of sacrifice in his hands. Beyond the veil lay the Holy Place where priests, and none but priests, might enter for the daily service of God's House; and its door was another curtain of softly glowing, many-hued needlework, lacking only the angel guardians that were wrought upon the inner veil.

Around the holy tent lay the outer court, where the people might gather for sacrifice and worship. Sixty pillars of bronze

surrounded it, and between them, from silver rods, hung curtains of fine, embroidered linen. And its gate, also, was a curtain of many-coloured needlework.

Then in his vision Moses saw within the Holy of Holies. Lo! there was no image of God there, as in the mighty temples of the land of Egypt. There was naught but a small chest of acacia wood, plated without and within with solid gold; and on its sides were golden rings with gilded staves passing through them, that the priests might lift the Ark of the Lord, and bear it before the people as they journeyed. "Within the Ark," said the Lord to Moses as he looked, "thou shalt put the stone tables of the testimony that I shall give thee."

The covering of the Ark was one slab of solid gold. Upon it, at either end, there stood an angel with wings stretched high over the Ark, and with face turned towards his fellow at the other end. This was the Mercy-seat; and "there I will meet with thee," said the Lord God, "and there I will talk with thee, from between the two cherubim, of all things that I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel."

The broidered veil dropped again, and Moses was outside it in the Holy Place. There he saw a table of gilded acacia wood, bearing loaves of unleavened bread, to be laid weekly in offering before the Lord. Chalices and flagons of gold were there also, with offerings of wine. On the other side stood a lamp-stand. Of pure gold it was shaped, and from a single stem there rose seven golden branches, each bearing on its tip a lamp filled with pure oil. And the seven lamps were to burn night and day, and never to be extinguished. Last, before the door of entrance, was a small, golden altar, whereon was to be offered, morning and evening, naught but fragrant incense, and that by the High Priest alone.

Beyond, in the outer court, Moses saw a great bronze altar where the daily burnt-offerings might be presented, and a mighty vessel of bronze filled with pure water, wherein the priests might cleanse themselves before they came to make offering at the altar.

Besides all this, the Lord showed to Moses the fashion of the stately robes in which Aaron the High Priest, and all who should follow him in that holy office must be clothed. His innermost

garment was a coat of fine linen reaching from throat to ankle. Over it there came a robe of dark blue. On its hem were wrought pomegranates of blue and purple and scarlet; and between each pair of pomegranates there hung a little golden bell, so that every step that the High Priest made, as he went about the service of God's House, was accompanied with the mellow chime of bells.

Above the robe came a kind of surcoat, named the ephod. It was woven of fine linen, with gold threads running through it, and was broidered with blue, purple, and scarlet, and girt with a girdle of the same. It was fastened on either shoulder of the priest by a clasp of onyx, and on these two stones were engraven the names of the twelve tribes of Israel, six tribes on each stone. On his breast, above the surcoat, the High Priest wore a breastplate of broidered linen, bearing, within golden settings, four rows of precious stones, three in each row; and each stone of the twelve was graven with the name of one of the tribes of Israel.

Now this was the manner of the ordering of the graven jewels:

Sardius (Judah)	Topaz (Issachar)	Carbuncle (Zebulun)
Emerald (Reuben)	Sapphire (Simeon)	Diamond (Gad)
Jacinth (Ephraim)	Agate (Manasseh)	Amethyst (Benjamin)
Beryl (Dan)	Onyx (Asher)	Jasper (Naphtali)

Upon his head the High Priest was to wear a mitre of fine linen, bearing on its front, fastened by a dark-blue cord, a plate of pure gold, with the words "Holiness to the Lord" graven thereon.

Many other things did the Lord cause His servant to see and understand as to the manner of the service of His House, and when He had taught him all these things, He gave unto him two tablets of stone, graven by the finger of God, that they might preserve the Laws that He had made for Israel from generation to generation. Then this wondrous communion of God with man was suddenly broken, and in fierce anger the Lord bade Moses get him down to the people in the valley. For during the long days and nights when they were left without their leader, evil thoughts had come to them and had blossomed into evil deeds, as you shall hear.

(9) THE GOLDEN CALF

WHILE Moses dwelt with God on the Holy Mount, the hearts of the men of Israel grew anxious and doubtful. At last they could endure no longer. They gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and cried to him, "Make thou a god to go before us; for as for this man Moses, who brought us up from Egypt, what has become of him we know not." Weakly Aaron yielded to them. "Bring me," he said, "your earrings, and all the golden ornaments of your wives and children." And when the gold was brought, Aaron cast it into a furnace, and moulded therefrom the image of a calf such as he had seen set on high as a god in the land of Egypt. With a graving tool he fashioned and shaped it; and then he set it before the people.

Their foolish hearts were glad when they saw the senseless image. "Behold thy god, O Israel," they cried, "which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt!" And Aaron, adding sin to sin, built an altar before the calf, and proclaimed a feast to the new god. So on the morrow the people offered burnt-sacrifice and incense to their idol, and turned them to feasting and merriment.

High on the mountain-top, the Lord spake fiercely unto Moses. "Get thee down," He said, "for thy people have corrupted themselves. Right soon they have turned from their obedience and have made them a golden calf to worship. Even now they do sacrifice unto it and say, 'Behold thy god, O Israel.' Long enough have I borne with these stubborn rebels. Stay Me not therefore, for in Mine anger I will destroy them, and of thy children I will make instead a great nation." But Moses pled with God for his people. "Lord," he said, "bethink Thee! Why should the Egyptians mock, and say that Thou hast led the people forth with such might only to do them a mischief? Have mercy on them, and abate Thy fierce anger. Remember Thy covenant, and Thy promise to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, that Thou wouldst multiply their children and give them the goodly Land of Promise for an

heritage for ever." And at that pleading, the anger of the Lord was stayed for a season.

So Moses turned and gat him down the mountain-side. In his hand were the two tablets of stone, graven on both sides with the words of the Lord's testimony, and with him was his servant Joshua. Now as they came down the hillside and drew near unto the camp, the sound of shouting reached their ears, and Joshua cried, "There is a sound of war in the camp." "Nay," said Moses, "this is no sound of warriors slaying or being slain; it is the sound of singing." Nearer still they came, and now they could see the calf of gold standing in the midst, and the crowd of fools dancing and singing before it among the tents. Then the heart of Moses grew hot with anger. He flung from his hands the tablets of the Lord's testimony, and they were shivered to pieces on the rocks beneath. Swiftly he came through the gaping multitude to where their idol stood; swiftly he cast it down and threw it into the furnace whence it came; then he ground it to powder and threw the golden dust into the brook that ran through the camp, and bade the people drink thereof, and they obeyed in silence and in dread.

Turning to his guilty brother, he rebuked him sternly for his sin. Then he stood, indignant and menacing, at the gate of the camp. "To me," he shouted, "every man who is on the Lord's side!" At his cry all the men of the tribe of Levi gathered themselves in rank beside him. "Gird on your swords," he said, "and go through this camp from gate to gate. Slay all whom you meet, brother, neighbour, or friend, that this vengeance may cleanse you in the sight of God!" So the men of Levi smote and spared not, and under their swords there fell that day three thousand men.

Now on the morrow after that grievous day, Moses gathered the people before him. "Ye have greatly sinned," he said, "yet now I will beseech the Lord for you: it may be that I shall make atonement for your sin." Then he went up once more into the Holy Mount, and, standing before the Lord, he made his prayer unto Him on this wise: "Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if Thou wilt, forgive their sin; and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book which

Thou hast written." And it befell that, at that prayer, God turned from the fierceness of His anger. "Nay," He answered, "not thee, but him that sinneth against Me will I blot out of My book. Go, therefore, and lead thy people as I bade thee, and My Angel shall go before thee. Yet let the people beware of sin in time to come, lest I visit them in judgment."

After this great intercession, Moses took the tent where he had been wont to pray to God, and pitched it beyond the camp. And when any man of Israel desired to worship the Lord, he went out to this sacred tent, and there Moses besought the Lord for him. And when Moses entered into the tent, the pillar of the cloud stood like a warder before the tent-door, so that the people, seeing it, knew that God was there, and bowed in worship each man before his own tent. Thus Moses spake with God as a man talketh with his friend.

And it befell that into the heart of Moses there came a great and high desire. "I beseech thee," thus he spake unto the Lord, "shew me Thy glory." "Nay," answered the Lord, "not My glory—My goodness thou shalt see, My grace and My mercy shall be told thee; but thou canst not see My face, for no man shall see Me, and live. Hew thee, therefore, two tablets of stone, like unto the first which thou brakest, that I may write once more the words of My testimony thereon. And in the morning come thou up into the mountain before Me; but come alone, and suffer neither man nor beast to draw near the mount." So on the morrow Moses did according to the command which God had given him. With the two tablets in his hands he climbed the mountain and stood before the Lord. And God set him in a great rock-cleft and covered him while the glory of the Lord passed, and thereafter Moses looked forth and beheld the vanishing of that wondrous splendour. And as he gazed, a mighty voice proclaimed, as a herald is wont to proclaim the title of the king, his master, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering and abundant in goodness and truth; keeping mercy for a thousand generations, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, yet in no wise clearing the guilty; visiting the sin of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth

generation." Then Moses hastened to bow his head to the ground, and worshipped.

For forty days and forty nights he abode there upon the mount before God; neither did he eat nor drink in all those days. At length he came down from that wondrous fellowship with God, bearing the two tablets graven with the ten words of God's commandments. Aaron and the men of Israel came forth to meet their leader as he drew near; and lo! when they beheld him, his face shone with a strange and awful light, so that they were afraid to come near to him. Himself, in his humility, he knew nothing of it; only when he saw their fear and learned the reason of it, he veiled his face, that they might no longer dread him. Yet when he entered the tent of meeting to speak to the Lord, as was his wont, he took the veil from his face; and ever when he came forth again, it seemed to the people that the light had brightened upon their leader's countenance ere he veiled it again.

So for many days the nation abode before the Mount of God; and, while they had rest from their wandering for a season, the Tabernacle of the Lord's Dwelling-place was made according to the vision that God had shown to Moses. For the people brought, with willing hearts, abundance of gold and silver and bronze, of precious stones, and of fine linen and many-coloured cloths—all that was needed to make the tent, until indeed there was more than enough, and command had to be given that no more should be brought. Two cunning workmen, Bezaleel and Aholiab, were set over all these who wrought, and under their guidance the whole nation, men and women alike, toiled with willing and glad hearts to make God's habitation.

After long labour it stood at last complete, stately and beautiful, and when Moses saw how well and truly Bezaleel and Aholiab and their fellow workmen had wrought it according to his vision, he lifted up his hands to God and blessed them for their faithful service. On the first day of the first month of the second year of their journeyings it was that all was finished. Then for the first time Moses lit the golden lamps on the seven-branched candlestick to burn for ever before the Lord, and he and his brother Aaron, the High Priest, and Aaron's sons purified themselves and

made offerings upon the altars of gold and of bronze. Then the glory of the Lord descended in the cloud upon the Tabernacle, and so great was the awe thereof that no man, not Moses himself, dared enter for a season into the tent of the Lord. And in their journeyings in after days this cloud with the glory of the Lord shining in it became a sign and a leader unto the Israelites. For if the cloud rested and abode upon the Tabernacle, then the camp remained where it was, but if the cloud rose high and drifted onwards, then the tents were struck and the men of Israel followed their mysterious guide. Day by day and night by night, the cloud was there, dark in the daytime, fiery red throughout the darkness, that so the people might always know that the Lord was with them.

Now when all was ready, and the service of the Lord's House had been ordered and arranged as it should be observed in all generations, Aaron and his sons were consecrated as priests for the work of the Lord; and upon Aaron in especial were put the holy and beautiful garments of the High Priesthood—the mitre, the robe, the ephod, and the jewelled breastplate. So, being purified and anointed, Aaron drew near to the altar of the Lord, and thereon he offered sacrifice. And when the sacrifice was ready upon the altar and Moses and Aaron had blessed the people, then came there forth lightning from the presence of the Lord and consumed the sacrifice with fire. So the people knew that the offering was accepted, and great awe fell upon them, so that though they shouted for joy, they also bowed their faces to the ground, and worshipped.

Yet even in this time of gladness there befell a great and sore evil. For the sons of Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, were uplifted with pride beyond measure over their new dignities; and, when the first sacrifice had been consumed, they came near unto the altar with their censers and with incense therein, and offered the incense with fire of their own kindling, and not such as the Lord had commanded. Then came forth lightnings from the Lord and smote them, so that they died straightway in their presumption. And Moses said to his brother, "This is that of which God warned us, saying 'Let them that come nigh to Me be holy;'" but Aaron

bowed his head in speechless sorrow. So Moses bade men carry forth the bodies of the dead priests and bury them. And to the other sons of Aaron, Eleazar and Ithamar, he forbade all mourning for their brethren, seeing that Nadab and Abihu had died by the judgment of the Lord. And upon all those who served the House of the Lord he laid his warning, lest any of them, by carelessness or by wilful default, should mar God's worship, and so bring down upon the people the anger of the Lord. And thus at last all was ordered aright, and Moses was content.

(10) THE SCAPEGOAT

TO tell you of all the ordinances that the Lord appointed for His people in Sinai would take overlong. Yet there were certain of them that deserve to be kept in remembrance, and of these the chief was the setting apart of the scapegoat to bear away the sins of the people on the Day of Atonement. Once every year on the tenth day of the seventh month, the whole nation was assembled before the Lord. On that day no work was to be done by any man, nor was any food to be eaten. Early in the morning the High Priest purified himself, and arrayed himself in his robes, and, slaying a bullock for a sin-offering, he entered into the Holy of Holies, and sprinkled the blood of the sacrifice upon the Mercy-seat. Then coming forth, there were brought unto him two goats, and of these one was chosen by lot to be sacrificed before the Lord, and the other to be marked "for Azazel," the evil spirit that men believed to dwell in desolate places.

The goat on which the lot of the Lord fell was slain, and its blood was borne by the High Priest into the Holy of Holies and there sprinkled, like the blood of the bullock, upon the Mercy-seat. Once more Aaron came forth from before the Lord, and the other goat, the goat of Azazel, was brought to him. Upon its head he laid both his hands, and, standing thus, he confessed over it the sins of the people. Then the goat, thus bearing, as it were, the nation's guilt upon its head, was given in charge to a man

appointed for the task, and he drave it far away from the camp into the midst of the desolate wilderness. There he let it go loose, to wander until death should come to it; and thus God gave His people the sign that their sins were borne away from them and should be remembered no more. He who led the goat, and all who had a share in the sacrifices of this Great Day of Atonement—these purified themselves and washed their clothes ere they returned to the camp. So were the sins of Israel atoned for, and year by year, so long as the nation endured, this statute of the Lord was observed.

Many were the commands which were laid upon the people to guide them aright, and of these, while all were just and righteous, some were full of mercy and kindness, and of thoughtfulness for the poor and the weak. Thus in the days of harvest, or vintage, or of the gathering of fruit, no Israelite was allowed to reap the corners of his field, nor to glean after the reapers, nor to strip his vines and fruit-trees quite bare of their fruit. Something was always to be left for the poor and the stranger, that everyone might have a share in the plenty and joy of the ingathering. Moreover, once in every seven years the land was to have its Sabbath. In that seventh year the fields were not to be sown, nor the vineyards pruned, nor was the husbandman to gather what might grow of itself for his own profit; it was to be left for all who needed to gather and use.

And after seven times seven years, in the fiftieth year, there came the Jubilee. It was proclaimed by sound of trumpet throughout all the land on the Great Day of Atonement; and all that year the land had rest, and even those on whom trouble and misfortune had fallen in the past shared in the joy of the nation. For with the Jubilee, all heritages were restored, and all servitudes were broken. It might be that, in his poverty and need, a man had been forced to part with his land or to sell himself as a servant. But when the fiftieth year came round, his land was given back to him and he himself was set free. Thus the Lord commanded, in order that the strong and rich might not oppress the weak and poor, and that no man of Israel might be a slave or be shut out from hope.

DESTRUCTION OF THE GOLDEN CALF.
(Exodus, xxxii 20.)

Even the stranger and alien who might dwell in the land was to be mercifully and kindly treated. "Ye shall not oppress him," said the Lord, "but he shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God."

Thus, with mercy and with judgment, God ordered the future of His people. And He bade them remember that if they kept His Laws and were obedient, His mercy would be with them and His strength would give them victory; but if they forgot His words, and turned to disobedience and folly, then trouble and disaster would fall upon them. So the Lord made an end of all the statutes and judgments and laws which He made between Him and the children of Israel in Mount Sinai by the hand of Moses.

(11) MURMURINGS AND MISFORTUNES

NOW the long sojourn of Israel before the Holy Mount drew to an end, and the time was come for the nation to journey onwards to the Land of Promise. On the twentieth day of the second month in the second year of their journeying, the men of Israel looked towards the Tabernacle of the Lord, and, lo! the cloud had risen and was slowly moving onwards. Then they knew that the day had come for the long march to begin again. The great tent of the Lord was struck and carried forwards by the sons of Gershon and the sons of Merari. In four great battalions the nation marched and camped, and each battalion was made up of three tribes. Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun marched under the banner of Judah; Reuben, Simeon, and Gad under the banner of Reuben; Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin under the banner of Ephraim; and Dan, Asher, and Naphtali under the banner of Dan. And the banner of Judah ever went foremost, and the banner of Dan led the rear-guard.

So, in ordered line, they took their departure from the Mount of God, and for three days they marched and camped among burning valleys and desolate mountains. Morning by morning the

cloud rose and led them onwards, and, as the Ark followed it, Moses said, "Rise up, Lord, and let Thine enemies be scattered, and let them that hate Thee flee before Thee." Evening by evening the cloud sank down and rested, and, as the march was stayed, Moses said, "Return, O Lord, unto the ten thousand thousands of Israel."

But it was not long before the people wearied of this steady journeying, and murmurings grew loud on the outskirts of the camp. And while they grumbled and complained, great thunder-clouds rolled up across the hills, and fierce lightnings flashed forth, and many of the murmurers were slain. For a little while the dread of the storm quelled the discontent, and in terror the people besought Moses to pray to the Lord for them. As he prayed, the storm rolled away, and with it the dread of God's anger. Ere long the murmurs were heard again on every side. This time it was their food that displeased them. Forgetting their bitter bondage in Egypt, they remembered naught but the plenty and variety of their food in the House of Bondage. "We are weary of this endless manna," they cried. "Who shall give us flesh to eat? For our very soul is dried up." Like greedy children whose greed is denied, they stood weeping in their tent-doors, and Moses was ashamed to think how poor-spirited a people he led.

His heart was bitter within him, and he cried to the Lord: "I am not able to bear all this people alone. Kill me, I pray Thee, out of hand, if I have found favour in Thy sight; and let me not see my wretchedness." Then in His anger the Lord bade Moses speak thus to the murmurers: "The Lord shall give you flesh, and ye shall eat. Not for a few days, but for a whole month shall ye eat, until you are sick of flesh as ye have sickened of the manna, and the very sight of it be loathsome to you; because ye have despised the Lord."

In his inmost heart, Moses could scarce believe that such a thing might be in the wilderness; but God rebuked his doubt. "Is the Lord's hand waxed short? Thou shalt see now whether My word shall come to pass unto thee or not."

So it befell that there came a great wind from the sea; and, driven before it, came mighty flocks of quail. Overspent and

wearied with their flight, they fell all around the camp, so that the ground was piled high with them for a day's march on every side, and the people had but to gather and slay and eat. For a day and a night, and yet a day, they gathered in their senseless greed. So mad was their gluttony, that, even as God had warned them, it brought its own judgment. The sudden change of food and the brutal surfeit sent death swiftly through the camp, and, while the flesh was yet in their mouths, men were dying on every hand.

So the name of that place was called "The Graves of Greed," and from that ill-omened spot the children of Israel journeyed to Hazeroth, glad to be gone from where the Lord had granted them their hearts' desire in His anger.

As though the trouble that Moses must needs bear in the folly of the people were not enough, his own kith and kin must add to it. For Aaron and Miriam had a quarrel against him because of his wife, and it may be that Miriam was the bitterer, being a woman angered concerning a woman. Angrily they taunted him, boasting that the Lord spake by them as well as by him, so that he had no right to pre-eminence. Now Moses would have borne their folly and ill-will in silence, for he was the most patient and meek of all men; but as they taunted him, they heard the voice of the Lord. "Come out, ye three," It said, "unto the Tabernacle of the Congregation." And, as they stood before the holy tent, the cloud came down upon it; and from the midst of the cloud the Lord rebuked Aaron and Miriam. "Wherefore were ye not afraid," He said, "to speak against My servant Moses?" The cloud lifted again, and as Aaron looked in terror upon his sister, behold! Miriam was smitten with leprosy, and all her skin was loathly white; nor, even when Aaron confessed their sin and Moses interceded for his sister, could she be healed at once. For seven days she was shut out from the camp as unclean; then the plague departed from her, and she was received among her people once more—a wiser woman.

Now after many days of weary marching they came at last to Kadesh, on the edge of the south country of Canaan. Before them the land rolled up in long slopes to the highland of Palestine, and they saw their heritage. Goodly and fair it seemed, with its

green grass and its trees and the sparkle of its springs, to eyes wearied and dazzled with the fierce glare of the desert rocks and sands. Yet before they entered upon the land, need was that they should learn what manner of land it was, and who and of what spirit were the tribes that dwelt therein, lest, moving too rashly, they might fall into a snare and be destroyed. Therefore the Lord bade Moses choose out twelve men, one man from each tribe, that they might go through the land from end to end and spy it out, and so bring back word to their people of the task that lay before them.

So the twelve spies were chosen, and their names are in remembrance unto this day; but of them all there are but two that deserve to be held in honour, and these are Caleb, the son of Jephunneh, of the tribe of Judah, and Joshua, the son of Nun, of the tribe of Ephraim. All of them were chiefs in their own tribes, and ere they set out Moses gave them command to go through the land, even to the great mountain, Hermon, in the far north, and to bring report of all that they saw—as to the people, whether they were many or few, strong or weak, whether they dwelt in tents or in fenced cities, and as to the land, whether it was fertile or barren, wooded or bare. And the last word he spake unto them was, "Be of good courage!" and had they hearkened to that, they had done well. But it was not to be so, and thus much harm and loss came to their nation and to themselves,—or at least to the ten of them who forgot the command of Moses.

So the twelve spies set out on their adventurous journey. Northwards they travelled from their southland camp along the mountain ridge of Judea, through the hills and valleys of Samaria and Galilee, until they came to Rehob and made their northernmost camp in the wide-spreading skirts of the great, snow-clad Mount Hermon; and ever as they went they searched the land with eager eyes. Turning southwards again, they came at last to that ancient city, Hebron, hard by the spot where Abraham's camp had stood for so long. It was the pleasant time when the heavy clusters of grapes begin to ripen with the sunshine, and as they passed through the vale of Eshcol they gathered of the fruit of the land, pomegranates and figs, and one mighty cluster of

purple grapes, so heavy that it was slung upon a staff and borne between two men. After forty days of wandering, they came back to the camp on the edge of the desert and told their tale to Moses and the assembled people.

"Surely," they said, "this land is a rich and goodly land, as ye may see from these fruits which we have brought therefrom—a land flowing with milk and honey. But the people that dwell therein are mighty, and the cities are strong and fenced. Many are its tribes—the sons of Anak, mighty men and great, the Amalekites in the southland, the Hittites, the Amorites, and the Jebusites in the northern mountains, and the Canaanites on the sea-coast and in the Jordan Valley."

Now when they heard the tale of the nations that must be conquered, the men of Israel were troubled in mind. But Caleb stood forth. "Let us go up at once," he said, "and take possession; for we are well able to conquer the land." But all his fellows of the twelve, save Joshua, were of a craven spirit. "Nay," they cried, "we cannot do it. These people are stronger than we. The land is full of war and slaughter, and its men are bigger and stronger far than we. Truly when we saw the sons of Anak, stark and tall, we felt like grasshoppers before them, and so they deemed us."

Then the spirit of the nation broke, and all the people wept. "Would to God," they said, "that we had died in Egypt, or in the desert. Why has God brought us to this land to perish by the sword and to leave our wives and children as captives? Let us choose a captain, and turn back again to Egypt."

Shamed at their brethren's faint-heartedness, Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before the Lord. Caleb, also, and Joshua, rending their clothes in sign of sorrow, strove to put heart into the people. "Goodly in very truth," they cried, "is this land. God with us, we shall possess it. Rebel not against the Lord, nor fear your foes. They shall be but bread for our eating. What defence have they to match with Jehovah who is on our side? Fear them not."

But Israel in mad terror was ready to stone the faithful two. In that moment the glory of the Lord flashed out in the cloud before the people, and His voice was heard. "How long will this

people provoke Me? Will they never trust Me, after all the wonders I have done before their eyes? Behold! I smite them with the pestilence, I take from them their heritage, and from the seed of Moses I will raise up a mightier nation." "Ah, Lord," cried Moses, "shame us not. The Egyptians will hear of our disgrace, and will tell it in mockery to the people of this land; and all the glory of Thy presence in the cloud and fire shall seem but a foolish dream. Men shall say, 'Because Jehovah was too feeble to give them the land which He promised, therefore He slew them in the wilderness.' So shall Thy name be despised! Now, therefore, according to Thy long suffering and Thy mercy, pardon this people, as Thou hast done, from their coming out of Egypt until now."

Then God made answer: "I have pardoned. The land shall go to the seed of Abraham, as I have promised; but never to these craven murmurers. Not one man of them that is of twenty years and upwards shall possess it, saving only Caleb and Joshua, who have been faithful. In the wilderness they shall wander forty years till they fall and die, and their bones shall bleach among the sands. Forty days ye searched the land to bring an ill report of it; forty years ye shall wander and find no rest, a year for a day." And, at that word, the plague fell upon the spies, and ten of them died in that very hour before the Lord,—Caleb and Joshua alone were left.

That night the people spent in mourning. On the morrow they thought to atone for their coward fear by rash haste. They gathered themselves together to Moses. "Lo!" they said, "we are here; we confess our sin; we will go and take the land." But Moses would have none of their foolhardiness. "Too late now," he said, "the Lord will not be with you. Go not up, lest ye fall by the sword." But there was no turning them from this new folly. Go they would, and go they did. Nevertheless, Moses would not suffer the Ark of Jehovah to lead them, nor would he himself set foot beyond the camp; and, as the leaderless rabble marched confusedly onwards, the hosts of the Amalekites and the Canaanites rushed down on them from the mountain slopes and swept them away in rout. Thus, in utter failure and discomfiture, ended Israel's first attempt to enter upon its heritage.

(12) THE AIMLESS YEARS

NOW were the children of Israel indeed in evil case, for the weird that lay upon them was that still they must be journeying, yet never arrive, and still be contending, yet never gather the spoil. Small wonder, perhaps, that there rose discontent among the people and weariness in the heart of their leader. So it fell out that there was rebellion ere long in the camp, and that, ere the fruitless years were passed, even the meek spirit of Moses was chafed into fiery anger, so that he sinned against the Lord.

For Korah the Levite planned in his heart to question the leadership of Moses and Aaron, and he opened his mind to Dathan, Abiram, and On, men of the tribe of Reuben, and they in turn to others, till they had poisoned two hundred and fifty of the chief men of the people. Crowding around the two brethren, they vented their venom and jealousy in bitter words. "Ye have lorded it over us long enough," they said. "The rest of us are as holy as you, and Jehovah is with us as well as with you. Why should ye lift yourselves up above your brethren?"

Bitter it was to Moses to know that such base jealousy was in men's hearts towards him. Yet he answered them quietly: "Jehovah shall judge and choose between us. Tomorrow, thou Korah and thy company shall come, bringing your censers, with fire and incense, before the Lord, and that man whom the Lord shall choose shall be holy. No small thing did Jehovah grant you, ye sons of Levi, when He set you apart from the rest of the nation to serve the Tabernacle, and to be near to Him; yet now ye desire the priesthood also!"

So Korah and his party agreed to the test; but when Moses summoned Dathan and Abiram, they answered with insults and refused his summons. On the morrow, therefore, the rebels came, two hundred and fifty men, with Korah at their head, and each man with his censer in his hand, to the door of the Tabernacle, to

await Jehovah's judgment; and the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud. Then came there a voice from the glory, saying to Moses and Aaron, "Separate yourselves from this people, that I may consume them in a moment." But the brethren besought the Lord that He would not destroy the whole nation for the sin of one man, and God bade them command the people to come apart from the tents of the rebels and leave them alone. So it was done. The congregation shrank away on every side from the guilty men, and Dathan and Abiram and all their families came forth and stood in the doors of their tents to see what might befall.

Then said Moses: "Thus shall ye know that the Lord hath sent me, and that I have done naught of mine own mind. If these men die the death that is common to us all, then Jehovah hath not sent me. But if the Lord do a strange thing and the earth open her mouth and swallow them alive, then ye shall know that He hath judged their guilt." Even as he spake, so it came to pass; for the earth yawned with a great earthquake, and Dathan and Abiram, and all their households, went down living into destruction. So dreadful was their wail of despair, that all who heard it fled, lest the earth should swallow them also. And while the earth still shook, fire came forth from the cloud and withered the two hundred and fifty incense-bearers where they stood. Their brazen censers, with their unhallowed fire, lay there before the Tabernacle. Eleazar, the son of Aaron, gathered them together at the command of Moses, and from them were fashioned plates to cover the altar of burnt-offering, that so there might be a perpetual remembrance of the danger of presumption.

Even so the trouble was not allayed. On the next day murmurings broke out again. "Moses and Aaron have killed the people of the Lord." Then the Lord's anger grew hot. "Get you apart from them," He said to Moses again, "that I may consume them." But Moses bade Aaron take a censer and stand between the Lord and the people, and make intercession. Already the plague had fallen; and Aaron stood there, between the living and the dead, swinging his censer and praying to the Lord, and at his prayer the plague ceased. Yet in that brief space of doom

there had fallen fourteen thousand and seven hundred men of Israel, over and above them that died in the rebellion of Korah.

After all this, God was minded to give a sign, that the men of Israel might no more question the authority of Moses and Aaron. Therefore He bade the prince of each tribe of Israel bring his leading-staff,—twelve staves in all, each man's staff engraved with his name. For the tribe of Levi, Aaron's staff was taken, with his name upon it. The rods were laid up before the Lord in the Tabernacle. "And it shall come to pass," said the Lord, "that the man whom I shall choose, his rod shall blossom. So shall the murmurings of the people cease."

When the next day came, Moses went into the Tabernacle. Lo! Aaron's rod had budded and blossomed, and it bare almonds, but all the rest were dry and sapless as before. Forth from the tent Moses came, bearing the twelve staves, and in silence each prince beheld the living rod of Aaron, and each took his own staff and went to his own place. Then at the Lord's command the rod of Aaron, with its buds, and blossoms, and fruit, was laid up in the Holy of Holies with the tables of stone and the pot of manna, to be a memorial in all the days to come against rebellion. And great fear fell upon all the people when they saw these things.

So passed the slow years of aimless wanderings, with few things to mark or to record, until the forty years of Israel's punishment were all but over. Few were left of the generation that saw God's wonders in Egypt when they came again to Kadesh, where they had failed before. Here Miriam died, she who had watched by the ark of bulrushes where the infant Moses lay, and had led the song of triumph over Pharaoh and his host. Now she was laid to her rest, and Moses and Aaron were left alone.

It seemed as though a blight were on the place, and on the fortunes of Israel there; for the new generation began again to fret and complain as their fathers had done. Water there was none, and the old cries against Moses were heard again in the camp. "Why hast thou brought us into the desert to perish? Would to God we had died when our brethren died of the anger of the Lord." Then God bade Moses stand, as he had stood once in the past,

before a rock and command water to come forth from it. Moses took the rod of power from the Tabernacle, and he and his brother gathered the people before the rock. But the leader's heart was sick and weary with the endless struggle. In hot anger he spake to the grumbling crowd. "Hear now, ye rebels, must *we* fetch you water out of this rock?" So saying, he smote the rock twice. Forth leaped a spring of living water, and the people drank and were satisfied.

Yet Moses had failed, and God laid on him and his brother a heavy sentence. "For your unbelief and anger," he said, "because ye did not glorify Me before My people, therefore ye shall not lead this nation into the land that I have given them." And with a heavy heart Moses named that spring the Water of Meribah, that is "The Water of Strife"—a costly strife for him.

Now was come the fortieth year, and the end of the wandering grew near. From Kadesh, Moses sent an embassy unto the King of Edom; for the men of Edom were the seed of Esau, Jacob's elder brother, and Moses would not have strife between them and Israel. "Thus saith thy brother Israel," so ran his message, "thou knowest all our troubles in Egypt, and how the Lord brought us forth. Now we are camped at Kadesh, on thy border. Let us pass through thy land. We will harm nothing, we will use nothing, even, or what we use we will pay for; only give us the right to pass through by the king's highway." But the son of Esau had naught of Esau's spirit. Churlishly he refused, and when a second request was sent, he set his army in battle-array to keep the marches against Israel. So, lest they should shed the blood of their brethren, the men of Israel turned away, and made the long sweep round the south of Edom, to reach their goal by another way.

On the edge of the Edomite highland of Seir rose Mount Hor, solemn and rugged. When the camp was pitched beneath its shadow, God spake to Moses and Aaron. "The time has come when Aaron must die, for he may not enter into this land because of your disobedience at the Waters of Strife." So the two great brethren, old men now and weary, climbed the long slopes of Mount Hor, and Eleazar, the son of Aaron, went with them. There,

on the summit, in the last of the sunlight, Aaron stood, clad in the splendid robes of the High Priesthood. Then Moses, with faltering hand, stripped them from him, one by one, and girded them upon Eleazar, that he might be High Priest in his father's stead. And when all was done, Aaron laid him down upon the hilltop under the great heaven of God, and so died. Leaving him there, Moses and Eleazar came down together, silent and sorrowful; and the men of Israel knew without asking that their first High Priest was gone back to God; and they mourned for him thirty days.

From Mount Hor they marched southwards till they had turned the southern flank of Edom; then passed northwards once more through the eastern desert. Once more, and for the last time, Moses heard the weary cry of discontent. "Why hast thou brought us up out of Egypt to die in this wilderness?" It was answered by swift judgment, for from the hot sand there crawled among the tents vipers, with burning poison, and bit many of the people, and whosoever was bitten died. In despair they cried to the man who had to bear all their burdens, and he prayed to God to save them. "Make thee a serpent of fiery, gleaming bronze," said the Lord, "and set it upon a pole; and whosoever, being bitten, will look to it, he shall live."

Then Moses swiftly did God's bidding, and raised the bronzen serpent high before the camp. And from all sides dying men turned their dim eyes towards it, and, as they looked, they revived. So the plague was stayed, and the symbol of God's mercy was kept as a hallowed relic through many a generation, until at last the good King Hezekiah was constrained to break it in pieces, calling it Nehushtan—"a bit of brass"—because men made a fetish of it and burned incense unto it.

Slowly they journeyed up the eastern borders of the land of Moab, and there is but little to tell of their doings, save this, that a single verse of one of the oldest of Israel's songs has come down to us from these far-off days. For at one of their camps God bade them dig for water. The headmen of the tribes themselves laboured at the task, and when the well was dug and the pure, sweet water bubbled up, the people broke into singing.

"Spring up, O well! Sing ye back to her!
Well which princes digged,
Well which the nobles delved,
Bearers of the sceptre and leading staff.
A gift from the desert it is."

Now was come the time of war, for the eastern land through which they journeyed was to be part of their heritage, and they must needs win it by the sword. First of the native kings who came forth to try the fortune of battle was Sihon, King of the Amorites. In pride and vainglory, and needlessly, he came, for Israel offered him peace if he would grant a passage through his land for the tribes. At Jahaz he fought, and was beaten; and the men of Israel took all his land, and dwelt even in Heshbon, his royal city, insomuch that an ancient song of the land tells of the downfall of the Amorite splendours.

Passing northwards, Israel came to Bashan. Now the King of Bashan (his name was Og) was of that race of mighty men and tall which had so terrified the spies of Israel. For many a day the great royal bedstead of black basalt, which he had made for his pride and vainglory, might be seen in Rabbath in the land of the children of Ammon. Thirteen feet and a half was the length of it, and six the breadth, a brag and vanity, since no man, not even of the sons of Anak, needed such a bed. Nevertheless, how great soever his stature might be, and how much greater his pride of it, it availed him naught in the day of battle, for he and his host were utterly smitten and routed, and Israel took his land in possession.

LIBRARY OF
Carl Herman Wintsch, M.D.
Cost.
No.

SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

(13) A WISE FOOL FROM THE EAST

BALAK, the King of Moab, was sore perplexed. The thrones of his neighbour kings were crumbling on every side of him, and he spake to his sheikhs and wise men. "As an ox licks up the grass of the field, so this multitude shall lick us up." Since he might not prevail by fair fight, he was minded to try black art. Therefore he sent to Pethor, in the river-land of Mesopotamia, unto a wise man, a magician, who dwelt there, whose name was Balaam, son of Beor. This was his message to the man: "Behold, a people come out of Egypt darkens the whole land, and is arrayed against me. Fight them by myself I cannot, for they are overstrong. Come thou, and curse me them; then it may be I shall smite them and drive them out: for well I know that he whom thou blessest is blest, and he whom thou cursest is cursed."

So the sheikhs whom Balak sent came with much treasure, and gave this message to Balaam. Now Balaam was in some sort a true seer, and had some knowledge of Jehovah. "Lodge here with me this night," he said to the men, "and I shall tell you on the morrow what the Lord bids me do."

So that night Balaam laid the matter before the Lord, and God forbade him to go. "Thou shalt not go with them, thou shalt not curse this people, for they are blessed." In the morning, therefore, Balaam dismissed the chiefs of Moab, and bade them tell their master that the Lord refused to let him do the King's bidding.

Balak was not to be denied. Again he sent sheikhs, more in number and higher in rank than before, and they brought great promises of honour from the King, if the prophet would but come and curse Israel. Balaam spake boldly enough to them. "If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord, my God, to do less or more." But in his heart he coveted the honours and the wealth. Therefore he bade them stay with him again, that he might ask God's will.

Now the Lord was but ill-pleased with Balaam for his will to go, and was minded to teach him so. "Go with the men," He said, "but thou shalt do naught in Moab save as I bid thee." So on the next day Balaam saddled his ass and went with the Moabite chiefs. For a while he rode on, his two servants running beside him. Then they came into a lane between two vineyards, and there was a wall on either hand. Suddenly the ass swerved aside. She had seen, what Balaam could not see, Jehovah's angel standing in the midst of the way, with a drawn sword in his hand. Balaam knew nothing of this, and struck the ass to turn her back; but rather than face the terror ahead, she pressed close to the wall till Balaam's foot was crushed, and in his pain and anger he struck her again. But now the angel drew back into a narrow neck of the lane where none might pass him; and as the ass came on and saw that she must face her dread, she lay down under her master.

Angrily he smote her with his staff, and thereat the Lord gave the dumb creature utterance. "What have I done unto thee," she said, "that thou hast struck me these three times?" "Thou hast fooled me," said the angry man. "Had I a sword in my hand, even now would I kill thee!" "Nay," said the ass, "thou knowest thine own ass, on which thou hast ridden for so long. Did I ever do the like before?" And Balaam said, "No," and began to bethink him. Therewith his eyes were opened, and he saw the Lord's angel standing over against him with his sword drawn in his hand, and in great fear he fell upon his face. "Wherefore," said the angel to him, "hast thou struck the ass? I have come out to oppose thee, because thy will rebelled against the Lord's. Thine ass, wiser than thyself, saw Me and turned aside three times. Ay, and had she not turned, I had slain thee and spared her." Then Balaam trembled and said: "I have sinned, for I knew not that Thou stoodest in the way against me. Now, if it displease Thee, I will get me back again." But the angel knew that the man's greedy heart was set on going. "Go with the men," He said, "but only the word that I shall speak unto thee, that thou shalt speak."

To the borders of Moab they came at last, and Balak met them. "Why didst thou not come sooner?" he said. "Am not I able to advance thee to honour?" "I am come;" answered Balaam; "let that

suffice. Whether my coming bring good words to thee or bad, God only can tell, for what He putteth in my mouth, that I must speak."

On the morrow, Balak took the seer forth to Bamoth-baal, "The High Places of Baal." Standing on the heights where the false god was worshipped, they looked out over the wide-lying camp of Israel. "Build me here seven altars," said Balaam, "and bring a bullock and a ram for each." Then the sacrifices were offered, and their smoke went up to heaven. "Abide here with thy burnt-offering," said Balaam to the King. "I go apart to seek the Lord, if it may be that He will meet with me, and whatsoever He speaketh unto me I shall tell thee." So the seer departed to a lonely cliff, and there the Lord spake to him, and put words in his mouth. "Thus and thus," He said, "shalt thou speak unto Balak when thou returnest to him."

With the burden of the Lord, Balaam returned to the hill of sacrifice. There stood the King of Moab, motionless, eagerly waiting, and around him stood all the sheikhs of his land. Like a man in a dream, the prophet obeyed not his own desire, but the impulse of the Lord's spirit, and his answer came to the unwilling ears of the King—a chant in praise of his dreaded foes!

"From the far hills of the East unto Moab,
Balak hath brought me.
'Come curse me Jacob,' he said, 'and on Israel
Fling thy defiance!'
How shall I curse them, when God hath not cursed them,
I, the Lord's prophet?
Who shall defy them on whom hath not fallen
Jahweh's defiance?
From the bare heights of the desolate mountains
Far I behold them,
Lonely in greatness, and single in splendour
Kin to no peoples!
More than the dust of the earth are their numbers,
No man may tell them.
Lord, in the end of my days, may my dying
Be with the righteous!"

Great was the wrath of the King of Moab! "What hast thou done?" he cried. "I bade thee curse mine enemies, and lo! thou hast blessed them altogether!" But the prophet answered, "What the Lord hath put into my mouth, that only must I speak."

Then said Balak: "Come with me to another place, whence thou shalt only see the utmost skirts of their camp, lest their multitude affray thee; and curse me them from thence." So he led the seer to another hilltop, and again seven altars were reared, and a bullock and a ram offered on each. Once more the King abode by the sacrifice, while Balaam went to meet the Lord; and when he returned this was the manner of the oracle which he uttered:

"Rise up, O Balak, and thou, son of Zippor,
Hearken unto me.
God is not man, nor the son of man is he,
To lie and repent him.
What he hath said he performs, and his utterance,
Shall he not do it?
Bless them he bids me, and this, his commandment,
Can I reverse it?
Jacob is righteous, and naught of perverseness
Is there in Israel.
God is their guide, and the shout of a monarch
Riseth among them!
Lo! out of Egypt Jehovah hath brought them
Strong in his presence.
Great in his might, like the might of an unicorn,
Stands he among them.
Magic is vain against Jacob, on Israel
Wizardry faileth!
Trembling, the nations shall say of this people,
'God hath wrought for them.'
Like a strong lion, and like a young lion,
Riseth their greatness.
Sated with slaughter and blood of their foemen,
Down shall they couch them."

In hot anger Balak spake to the seer. "In God's name, curse

BALAAM AND THE ANGEL OF THE LORD.
(Numbers, xxii, 23.)

them not and bless them not!" "Said I not to thee," answered Balaam, "that I must do all that the Lord speaketh?" But Balak's heart still hungered to hear his enemy cursed. "Come," he said, "to yet another place, and it may be that God will bid thee curse them there." Therefore, they got them up to the hill, Peor, which looketh down on the waste that men call Jeshimon, "Desolation," and again seven altars were built and seven sacrifices offered.

Now Balaam saw that it was the Lord's changeless will to bless Israel. Therefore he cast aside his spells, and looking towards the wilderness, he beheld the tents of Israel ranked in due order, tribe after tribe, and God's spirit came mightily upon him, so that he spake on this wise:

"Thus saith Balaam, the man whose black blindness
God hath enlightened.
Lo! in my dull ears the mighty commandments
Ring of Jehovah!
Lo! on mine eyeballs, in rapture unsealéd,
Shineth God's vision!
Goodly thy tents are, O Jacob, and Israel,
Fair thine encampments:
Like fruitful gardens by rivers of waters
Far they extend them:
Like the tall cedars, and aloes well watered,
Set by Jehovah.
Forth like a fountain, far-flowing, unceasing,
Stream his descendants.
Lofty his kingdom, yea, higher than Amalek
Shall be his monarch.
Forth out of Egypt Jehovah hath brought him,
Mighty his prowess,
Crushing the bones of his foes, and their vitals
Piercing with arrows.
Who shall awake him, or venture his anger,
His, the strong lion.
He that doth bless thee is blessed; but thy curser,
He shall be cursed!"

When Balak heard that word, he struck his hands together in anger. "I called thee to curse mine enemies," he cried, "and, lo! thou hast altogether blessed them these three times. Get thee home to thine own place. I thought to advance thee to great honour; but the Lord hath held thee back from it." And Balaam answered him, "Spake I not thus to thy messengers, saying, 'If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the Lord's commandment to do good or bad of mine own mind—what the Lord saith that will I speak'? And now, behold, I go to mine own people; hearken, therefore, to what this people shall do to thy people in the end of the days." Therewith the prophet's utterance came upon him again, and he sang thus:

"These are the words of the man on whose blindness
God's light hath broken.
Far in the future, dim from the distance,
Do I behold him.
Lo! out of Jacob a star, and from Israel a sceptre
Kingly in brightness!
Moab is smitten, from Sheth and his children
Mourning ariseth;
Edom is conquered, and Seir is vanquished
By Israel's valiance.
Yea, out of Jacob there cometh the ruler,
Stormer of cities;
Amalek, first of his foes, is appointed
To utter destruction.
Strong is thy dwelling, O Kenite, and lofty
Thy rest in the rock-cleft;
Yet on thee cometh a wasting unceasing,
Till Asshur o'erwhelm thee.
Ah, who shall stand, when the might of Jehovah
Worketh this wonder?
O'er the great sea come the ships of the mighty,
Yea, from far Kittim,
Asshur is wasted, and sore lies on Eber
Endless destruction."

Thus spake Balaam, and left Balak, and returned to his own river-land of the East. Yet before he parted from the King of Moab, he gave him an evil counsel, so that by the wiles and enticements that he put into the heart of the King, many men of Israel were enticed, and much people of the Lord perished. And so, for this wickedness of Balaam, he met his deserved fate. For he joined himself at last unto the men of Midian when they fought against Israel, and in the defeat of these unbelievers, there fell the wise fool who once had prayed, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his."

(14) A DEATH IN THE DESERT

OW drew near the time when Israel should enter upon the Land of Promise, and with it the time when the great leader of Israel must lay down his heavy burden and rest from his labours. For because of his fault at the Waters of Strife, as you have heard, God would not suffer him to go into the goodly land. As the time of his death drew near, Moses gathered unto him all Israel, and there in the wilderness, on the eastern side of Jordan, on the borders of their inheritance, he spake again to the new generation that had not heard, like their fathers, the living words from Sinai, the Law of the Lord their God.

Moreover he rehearsed in their hearing all the wonders that the Lord had wrought for His people, since the day when Israel turned back from the southern border of the land because of the false report of the spies.

And he gave them wise counsels, bidding them observe diligently all the commandments of their God. Then, calling before him the sheikhs of all the tribes, he blessed them, as Jacob had blessed his sons before his death, a blessing to each tribe according to his vision of its future. Over the whole nation he spread forth his hands in blessing. "The eternal God," he said, "is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms."

So at last came the day when he must die in the desert. Yet,

before his eyes closed on earthly sights, God gave him the vision of all the goodly land which should come to his people in the after days. For He bade him climb the mountain called Nebo, to the peak of it that men call Pisgah, which looks down upon the deep Jordan Valley and the city of Jericho. There, in the clear eastern air, all the land was spread before his eyes, fair and smiling, and God bade him look upon it all. Northwards he gazed, along the eastern side of Jordan over the brave country of Gilead, to be mother, in the days to come, of a prophet well-nigh as mighty as he who gazed. Westwards across the mountain of Judea, the stronghold of the race, even till his eyes caught in the far distance the silver glimmer of the Great Sea that men now call the Mediterranean. Southwards lay Jericho, the city of palm-trees, in the midst of its date groves, and the green Jordan Valley stretching to Zoar, the little city to which Lot escaped, while beyond lay the Dead Sea, amid its desolation. And the Lord spake to His servant as he stood there gazing, with a life's desire in his eyes. "This is the land which I sware unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, saying, 'I will give it unto thy seed.' I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither."

So the long service of Moses came to an end, and he laid him down alone, and, there on the lonely top of Pisgah, he passed to his rest. And the Lord buried him in a valley of Moab, looking to Beth-peor; but of the place of his grave no man knoweth. An hundred and twenty were his years, yet his eye was undimmed and the blood ran strong in his veins till the day when he entered into rest.

Below, in the plains of Moab, Israel mourned their lost leader for thirty days; then they girt themselves anew to the task before them. In place of Moses, Joshua led the host, for Moses had set him apart for this service, and all men obeyed him as they had obeyed the dead chief. Nevertheless, since the day of that death in the land of Moab, Israel has known no such prophet as Moses, who saw God and spake to Him face to face, and who saw all the signs and wonders of the Lord which He wrought on Pharaoh and his servants and the land of Egypt before all Israel, in the day of the great deliverance.

MOSES ON MT. PISGAH.
(Deuteronomy, xxxiv. 1–3.)

Part IV. *Stories of Israel's Iron Age*

(1) THE CONQUEST OF CANAAN

The First Triumph

NOW when Moses was gone to his rest, the Lord spake to Joshua, who had been the right hand of Moses in all his work. "Moses, My servant, is dead; arise thou, therefore, and all this people, and cross the Jordan into this land which I give to them. Wherever your foot shall fall, that land will I give thee, from the desert here to the Lebanon and the great river Euphrates, the land where the men of Heth dwell; and westwards your borders shall reach to the Great Sea, where the sun goes down at even. No man shall stand against thee; all that I was to Moses I will be to thee. Never will I fail or forsake thee, if only thou be strong and brave."

So Joshua took command of the host of Israel, and bade all men prepare for the great adventure. Before them and beneath them, in the hot, green valley and beyond the stream of Jordan, lay the walls and houses of Jericho, shining white among the palm groves. Here was to be the crossing of Israel, and here their first conquest in the Land of Promise. Joshua sent out two men from the camp that they might spy out the defences of Jericho, and by stealth they crept into the city, and found lodging in the house of Rahab, a woman of evil life, whose heart was yet better than her trade. But one of the warders of the gate had marked the garb of the spies and knew them for foreigners, and he bore word to the King of Jericho that men of Israel had passed the gate and were in the city. Meanwhile Rahab had taken the men up to the flat roof of her house, and there she hid them under bundles of flax that had been opened out on the roof to dry in the sun. There came a guard to her door, and the captain said to

her, "Bring out the spies that are in thy house." "Spies?" she answered. "Indeed I know of none. Two men truly came here; but at sundown, before the city gate was shut, they went forth again. Whither they went I know not; but surely if you hasten your pursuit you will overtake them." So the soldiers went off hotfoot to the fords of Jordan, never dreaming that the woman mocked them.

Then when the night had fallen, and all was still in the city, Rahab went up to the roof, and talked with the men of Israel. "Well I know," she said, "that Jehovah has given you this land. We, and all the people of the country, are shaking for fear because of you. For we have heard the wonder of the Red Sea, and the fate of Sihon and Og; and the heart is gone out of all our men, for they know that Jehovah your God is God of all. See, now, I have been kind and true to you. Swear to me, I pray you, that you will be kind to me and mine, and will save my father's household and all my kindred from death. Pledge me this, I beseech you." "Be true and silent," said the spies, "and we pledge our lives that we will save you and deal kindly and faithfully with you, when the Lord gives us the land."

Now Rahab's house stood on the city wall. So in the darkness she took a scarlet rope from her curtains and let it down from a window looking out from the wall, that the spies might climb down thereby. "Get you to the mountain," she whispered to them, as they stood ready to descend, "lest you meet with the guard. Hide among the hills for three days, till your pursuers have returned; then you can go your way in safety." And the men answered her: "Let us be clear, ere we go, as to how we shall quit ourselves in the matter of thine oath. When our tents are pitched around thy city, take thou this scarlet rope, and tie it in this window, plain to be seen. Bring all thy kindred into this house. For all that are under thy roof we shall answer; but if anyone goes forth again from thy house and so perishes, we shall be clear of his blood. And if thou betrayest us, our oath is void." "So be it," answered Rahab, and the men climbed down by the rope, and slipped away through the darkness. They hid among the hills that border the Jordan Valley for three days, as Rahab bade them;

then, when their pursuers had given up the fruitless chase, they crept down to the valley again, swam the flooded Jordan, and made their report to Joshua. "Verily," they said, "Jehovah hath put all the country into our hands; for the folk tremble at our very name."

Meanwhile at Jericho Rahab bound the scarlet rope in her landward window, and waited.

Early in the morning of the day after the return of the spies, Joshua broke camp at the acacia grove where the tents of Israel had been pitched, and all the host marched to the margin of the Jordan gorge. Three days they camped there, looking across to Jericho; then the heralds went through the camp to order the passing of the river. First was to go the Ark of the Covenant; then the people, tribe by tribe, were to follow. But the Ark was to pass a clear thousand yards ahead of all, that men might be able to see the track which it took; for indeed it was by a strange path that they were to cross Jordan. Moreover Joshua bade the people keep themselves pure against the next day. "For," said he, "tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you. He will give you a pledge of His presence, and a sign that He will drive out your enemies before you from the land. For so soon as the feet of the priests who bear the Ark are dipped in Jordan, the river shall be divided to let you pass."

Early the next day the wondering tribes were ready to march. The priests took up the Ark, and with steady pace they marched down the steep slope into the Jordan Valley. So soon as they had marched a thousand paces, the vanguard of the host followed; and the long column wound down into the burning heat of the gorge till they stood by the side of Jordan. A great stream and a mighty it seemed to them; for the season was the very prime of summer when the crops are ripe. Then Jordan flows strong and turbid with the melted snows of Hermon, and not only is his channel full, but all the flat land on either side is overflowed.

So the priests who bare the Ark marched straight forward into the muddy stream. But the moment that their feet were dipped in the flood, lo! a wonder. Far up in the valley to the north some strange chance dammed the current, and for a space the swift

river ceased to flow. Southwards the water below where the Ark was going forward ran its course to the Dead Sea; and before the wondering eyes of Israel there stretched a dry path through the river-bed, right to the western bank. Steadily the priests went forward till they reached the very midst of the bed of Jordan; then they stood still with their precious burden, and the Ark of the Covenant kept guard over the passage until the last man of Israel had crossed to the farther bank in safety.

Now when the host had passed the river, Joshua gave command as the Lord had bidden him, and twelve picked men, stout and strong, a man from each tribe, went down into the bed of the river where the Ark still rested; and each man heaved up on his shoulder a great stone, as heavy as he might well endure to carry, and bore it on his shoulder to the camping ground on the western side of the river. Moreover twelve great stones were set up on the spot where the Ark rested in the river-bed. And these stones were to be for a memorial to the men of Israel, that they might ever remember the goodness of Jehovah, who made for them a dry path through the midst of Jordan.

So when all the people had gone over, and the stones were set up, Joshua came to the bank of the river and called to the priests who bare the Ark, "Come ye up out of Jordan." And when they had borne the Ark to the bank of the river, it befell that God's hand was taken off the upper waters, and behold! the stream flowed down as before, strong and full, and filled all its channel to the brim. Then the children of Israel marched to their first camping ground in the Land of Promise. In the van of their host marched the mighty men of Reuben and Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh, to whom God had given an heritage on the eastern side of Jordan; and they were forty thousand men of valour, harnessed for war.

That night they found a camping ground on the eastern side of Jericho, and there Joshua bade them set up in a circle the twelve great stones that were taken out of Jordan, that so all who saw them might remember the wonders of Jehovah's hand. So because of that memorial circle, the name of the place was called Gilgal—the place of the circle. Four days they camped in Gilgal, and on

the fourteenth day of the first month they kept their first Passover in Canaan. And so it was that on the next day after the Passover Feast they had their first meal of the stored corn of the land. And on the next morning, when men went forth, as they were wont, to look for the manna, behold! there was none to gather; neither did any of the Israelites ever taste again of the wondrous food with which God had fed them and their fathers in the wilderness.

The host lay around Jericho, watchful and threatening, while the men of the city trembled behind their great walls. The new captain of Israel went forth from the camp, it may be to view the task that was before him; and as he went he was aware of a warrior armed for fight, and with a drawn sword in his hand, who faced him. Joshua was not slow to challenge him. "Art thou for us, or for our enemies?" "Nay," said the stranger, "but I am come as Captain of Jehovah's host." When Joshua heard that word, he bowed his face to the ground in worship; and this unearthly champion spake to him as he did obeisance. "Put off thy shoes," He said, "for thou standest on holy ground." And Joshua knew that God Himself had come to command His own host.

The leaguer of Jericho was strict and watchful. No man passed the lines of Israel to enter the city; none came out of the great gates. But Jericho was not to be won by might of man or craft of war. For this was the order which Joshua gave, at God's command, to the wondering host. "This day the priests shall bear the Ark of the Covenant, and shall go round the walls of the city, once. Before the Ark shall go the vanguard; behind it shall come the rest of the host; and between the vanguard and the Ark shall march seven priests, blowing trumpets of rams' horns. There shall be no shout or war-cry, until the day when I bid you shout. This shall ye do each day for six days." So the great host of Israel, with the golden Ark in the midst, marched that day once round the walls of Jericho, silent, save for the shrill blast of the rams' horns. The warriors of Jericho looked down from their towers, and wondered, and were ill at ease, doubting what this might mean. But no stroke was struck, and at night the host returned to its camp.

Day by day, for six days, this silent parade was repeated, till

the men of Jericho lost their first fear and scoffed at the marching multitude. And each day as they passed a certain house on the wall, the men of Israel marked a scarlet cord bound in its window, and remembered the pledge that had been made to Rahab. The seventh day dawned, and its first light saw Israel afoot once more; for this day they must compass the city seven times instead of once. Silently and doggedly they plodded round the walls, while their foes jeered at them from the towers. At last the weary seventh round drew to an end; and as the Ark reached the spot from which it had set out, the priests blew a still louder blast on their trumpets, and Joshua cried, "Shout! for the Lord hath given you the city."

From all the countless thousands there rose one thundering shout, and, as the roar of it ran along the line and echoed up the hills that look down on the Jordan gorge, all men stared in amaze. For lo! the mighty walls and towers of Jericho rocked and swayed for a moment, and then, while men held their breath, the whole circle of the city's bulwarks came crashing down in ruin, and a great cloud of dust went up to heaven. Only one holding did the earthquake spare, and that was an house on the wall in whose window was bound a scarlet cord.

Then Joshua cried to the men of Israel: "God's ban is on the city. Naught of the spoils thereof shall ye touch; for they are devoted to Jehovah. Slay and spare not: only Rahab and her kindred shall live, because she hid the spies." And to the two men whose lives she had saved, Joshua said, "Hasten, and bring forth Rahab, and her kin, and all that she hath, to the camp, as ye sware unto her." So the woman's life and the lives of her friends were saved in that day of doom. And in the after days a sheikh of the tribe of Judah, named Salmon, wedded her, and their son was Boaz, who wedded Ruth the Moabitess, as you shall hear; and it so befell that of the blood of this woman of a heathen race there sprang the greatest of all the kings of Israel—David, the man after God's own heart—and One yet greater than David, Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world.

Thus fell Jericho, and great was the slaughter at the fall of it. The city was burned with fire, and all the costly spoil was devoted

to Jehovah. And that no man might build again the first city of Canaan that Israel had destroyed, Joshua laid upon the place a curse: even that the man who built the city again should do it at the price of two lives—those of his dearest—for his eldest son should perish when the foundations were laid, and his youngest when the gates were set up. And so it came to pass many a year afterwards, in the days of the evil King Ahab of Israel. Now it fell out that in those days Hiel, a man of Bethel, braved the curse and rebuilt Jericho; and Abiram, his first-born, died at the laying of the foundations, and Segub, his youngest son, when the gates were set up, even as Joshua had said.

The First Check

Now that Jericho was fallen before the host of the Lord, it seemed to the men of Israel that nothing could withstand them. The next city that lay in their path was Ai, on the crest of the long mountain ridge that forms the backbone of Palestine; and from Jericho to Ai it is a long and weary climb up a rugged and desolate road where the sun beats mercilessly down upon burning rocks and shadeless road. So when Joshua sent up spies to view the town, they came back full of vain confidence. "It is only a little place," they said. "No need to make all the host toil up that weary pass. Send two or three thousand men, and they will be enough to smite the town."

So Joshua sent three thousand men up the pass to attack the little town; and below in the valley the people waited for news of an easy victory. Ere long men came streaming down the pass again, but not with shouts of victory. They came fleeing for their lives, looking ever and again behind them for the pursuers, and flinging away spear and shield to run the lighter. And when they reached the camp, they had a shameful story to tell. When they reached the gate of Ai, the sheikh of the little town did not wait to be attacked. The gate was thrown wide, and he and his men came rushing out upon the Israelite line. Panic-fear seized the chosen three thousand, and they turned and fled downhill for their very lives. So fast they ran that the pursuers were not able

to slay more than six and thirty of them, so the loss was not great; but the shame was all the worse, and the danger also. For Israel had suffered its first check, and who could tell how much the foe would be encouraged by such a victory?

Joshua was sore distressed, and in his perplexity he prayed to the Lord for help. "What shall I say," he cried, "when Israel turn their backs before their enemies? For all our foes will hear of it, and will surround us and cut us off; and where, then, shall be Thy glory?" But the Lord answered him sternly. "Up!" he said. "Why liest thou upon thy face? The blame is with Israel, for they have broken the ban that I laid upon Jericho. A man among them hath taken of the forbidden spoil and hath hidden it by stealth among his own goods. Hope not for my presence among you until this evil is purged. Therefore take thou the people by lot, tribe by tribe, then household by household, and then man by man, until thou find the man who has done this thing. Him thou shalt burn with fire, and with him all that is his, for that he has broken my ban and brought shame upon Israel."

So in the next day all Israel was gathered together and the lots were cast, tribe by tribe; and the lot fell upon the tribe of Judah. Clan by clan Judah drew their lots, and the clan of the Zarhites was taken. Household by household the Zarhites drew, and at last the lot of doom fell on a single man, Achan by name. Him Joshua drew aside from all the rest, and the leader of Israel spake to the doomed man, very gently, as to one on whom the shadow of death was already falling. "Oh, my son," he said, "give honour to Jehovah, and confess thy guilt to me. Hide it not from me, I pray thee." Then Achan bowed his head. "Indeed," he said, "my doom is just. I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel. For it fell out that in the sack of Jericho I saw a splendid robe of Babylonish weaving, and two hundred shekels of silver, and an ingot of gold. My heart coveted them, and I took them and hid them in the earth beneath my tent pole."

Then Joshua sent messages swiftly to the tent of Achan, and there, buried in the earth, were the forbidden spoils, even as the guilty man had said. Back they came with that ill-omened burden, and laid the paltry things that had cost Israel such shame and

THE STONING OF ACHAN.
(Joshua, vii, 24.)

loss in the light of day before the Lord. Naught was left but to execute the doom which Jehovah had pronounced. Achan, his plunder, and all his family, even his very cattle and sheep, were gathered together and brought down into the gloomy valley of Achor. Then Joshua spake the word of doom, shortly and sternly. "Hast thou troubled us?" he said. "Jehovah shall trouble thee this day." Then, with a vengeful hail of stones all Israel overwhelmed the wretched man, his children, and all that he had; and when the last quiver of life had gone out of the broken bodies, the men of Israel laid the dead on a great funeral pyre and burned them to ashes. On that ghastly place of death they piled a great cairn, which stands even unto this day; and they named the gloomy valley, the Vale of Trouble.

Now when this stern judgment was done, Jehovah bade Joshua go up once more against Ai. "See," he said, "I have given into thy hands the town, with its chief and all its land. Thou shalt do to them as unto Jericho and its people. Only the cattle ye may keep for yourselves." So Joshua chose him out thirty thousand of the bravest of Israel to war against Ai. Early in the morning they marched against the city, till the host lay over against its walls on the north side with a valley between Israel and the enemy. Then Joshua separated five thousand men from his army. "Hide yourselves," he said, "on the west side of the town. The men of Ai will come out against us, as they did at the first, and we shall make as if we fled before them. Then, when ye see my spear uplifted, rise and fall upon the town, and set it on fire. So I command."

All that night the host lay over against Ai. At the break of day the chief of the town beheld the leaguer, and he and all his men came pouring forth from the gate, weening in their pride that again an easy victory awaited them. So, indeed, it seemed, for as the men of Ai came on, Joshua and all his army turned to flee. Out to the pursuit came every man of Ai who could bear a sword, till the city was left defenceless.

Then in a moment Joshua turned and brandished his spear on high, and as the watchers in the western ambush saw it glitter in the morning sunlight, they rose from their hiding-place and

rushed upon the town. Through the open gate they poured, along the streets, where were none but women and children and old men. Hastily they set fire to house after house till the smoke of the burning town rose up black against the sky. The men of Ai turned, and saw their city taken. Their hearts melted within them at the sight, and they stood wavering, powerless to go forward or back. With a shout of triumph, Joshua and his men turned from their pretended flight, and charged upon the foe. From the burning city, the five thousand streamed forth, eager for the fight; and, trapped between the two armies, the warriors of Ai fell to the last man, saving only their chief. Him the men of Israel took alive and brought captive to Joshua.

Thus fell Ai, with an utter destruction. Twelve thousand men, women, and children were living within her walls when the sun rose that morning; when it set, twelve thousand dead lay among the blackened ruins and before the gates. The chief of the city Joshua hanged upon a tree until the even-tide; and when the sun had set, they took his body and flung it before the ruined gate of his town, and piled over it a great cairn of stones, to keep alive for evermore the memory of how the host of the Lord avenged its soiled honour.

The Tide of Conquest

And now indeed the dread of Israel lay like a black shadow across all the land of Canaan. All men heard of that grim slaughter wherewith Joshua had wiped out the shame of his own defeat, and their hearts failed them for fear. From all the tribes of the land the sheikhs gathered together, sheikhs of the mountain clans, of the valley-dwellers, and of the sea-traders of the Great Sea, to make an alliance against the dreaded invaders.

But the men of Gibeon, no mean city as cities went then, were more farseeing, or more cowardly, which you will. Their confidence in the power of any alliance to withstand Israel was small, and they took their own way of guile. They sent ambassadors to the victors, but with no pomp of fine robes and adornments. The men were clad in garments tattered and threadbare, their shoes were broken and clouted, their saddle-bags were old and worn,

their wine-skins were cracked with age and patched, and their bread was mouldy. Down to the camp at Gilgal came this embassy of tatters and patches, and bowing low before Joshua and his warriors, the men said, "We be come from a far country, and we beseech you to make a league of peace with us."

"But," answered the men of Israel, "perchance ye dwell beside us. How shall we make a league with you then, we who are sworn to war with the peoples of this land?" "Nay," said the men of Gibeon, "because of the fame of Jehovah we have come from a very far land. For the bruit of His mighty deeds, in Egypt and on the farther side of Jordan, has reached our ears. And when we heard it, our elders and wise men bade us take provision with us, and go to meet your host, and submit ourselves unto you, that there may be peace between you and us. See now, and judge for yourselves. Look at this bread of ours, dry and mouldy; it was hot and new from the oven when we set out. Look at these cracked wine-skins, these patched garments, and clouted shoes; all were new at our coming forth. So great is the journey from our land to you."

So spake the men of Gibeon, laughing the while in their hearts, and Joshua and his men, blindly trusting in what they saw, asked no counsel of the Lord, but made peace with Gibeon then and there, and the chiefs of the tribes of Israel sealed the treaty with an oath. But three days had scarce come and gone when they learned how they had been beguiled, for on the third day behold! the host was among the towns of Gibeon. Great was the discontent in the camp of Israel when the cheat that had been put upon them was made plain; yet the oath was sworn, and they could not break it.

So Joshua called the Gibeonites to him. "Wherefore have ye beguiled us?" he said sternly to them. "Surely ye said, 'We be come from a far country,' and lo! ye are at our doors. Hearken, therefore. Cursed are ye, for your deceit. Thralls and bondmen ye shall be to us from this time forth, to hew wood and draw water for the service of the House of Jehovah." Even so the men of Gibeon were glad that their doom was no worse. "Because of the great fear that was on us," they said, "we did this thing. For we

knew the commandment of Jehovah that this land should be yours, and that ye should destroy all its inhabitants, and we were sore afraid. Lo! now we are in thine hand: do unto us what seemeth good unto thee."

Thus the men of Gibeon saved their lives at the price of their freedom. Slaves they became, to hew wood and draw water for the House of Jehovah and the people of God, so long as Israel was a nation.

Now the cowardice of Gibeon did more to shake the hearts of the men of Canaan than aught else, for Gibeon was a famous city and a strong, and its men were held for valiant men of war. Therefore, Adoni-zedek, the Sheikh of Jerusalem, made an alliance with the sheikhs of Hebron and Jarmuth, Lachish and Eglon, and they five mustered their men and came up against Gibeon and beleaguered it, to win the recreant city back to their cause. But the men of Gibeon sent swift riders to the camp of Joshua. "Slack not thine hand from thy servants," was the message they bore, "but come up to us quickly and save us; for all the Amorites of the mountains are gathered against us."

Joshua and his host toiled up the steep pass from Gilgal to the mountain ridge where the besiegers' lines were drawn around Gibeon. All night they marched, and, ere the Amorite army was aware, the might of Israel was upon them at the dawning of the day. Before the rush and fury of that sudden onset, the Amorites were swept away, vainly fighting, and falling in hundreds either in the battle or the chase. Northwards and westwards the men of Israel drave their foes, slaying as they went; and as the chase poured down the valley, past Beth-horon and into the Vale of Ajalon, the terrors of heaven's archery were added to the terrors of the sword. For a mighty storm broke over the pass, and great lumps of ice, rather than hailstones, fell in merciless showers upon the fleeing Amorites, crashing through skull and brain, till the hail of Jehovah had slain more men than the sword of Israel.

In the fierce joy of battle and victory there came upon Joshua the rush of a poet's utterance. As he pursued and slew, he sang, and an ancient scribe has kept for us the record of a verse of that fierce song.

DEBORAH AND BARAK.
(Judges, iv, 4–9.)

"Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon, nor hasten
Yet thy descending
Thou, O pale Moon, o'er the valley of Ajalon
Shine thou unceasing.
Still the sun standeth, the moon stays her journey
High in the heavens;
Shadow of night shall not fall, until Israel
Wreaketh his vengeance."

And indeed so long was the chase and the slaughter that men doubted in their hearts if this wonder had not befallen, and the day been lengthened for Israel to exact vengeance upon his adversaries. Never was such a day in the nation's history, either before or after; for that day verily God fought for Israel.

But the crowning triumph of the day was yet to come. When their army broke and fled, the five kings saved themselves from the rout as best they might, and hid in a cave at Makkedah. Their hiding-place was marked by some of Joshua's scouts, who came and told the captain of Israel of the mighty prize that was in his hand. Joshua would not lose the full fruit of his victory, not for the capture even of five kings. "Roll great stones upon the cave's mouth," he said, "and set sentries. But tarry not yourselves. Chase and slay, so that our enemies may find no shelter in their cities; for Jehovah your God hath given them into your hands."

So the chase went on, and the Canaanites fell till the men of Israel were weary with slaying, and the poor remnant of their enemies escaped behind the walls of one town or another. Then the host drew together again to camp at Makkedah, and the hour of the five kings was come. "Open the mouth of the cave," said Joshua grimly, "and bring to me those five kings therefrom." The great stones were rolled away, and out of the black mouth of the cave came those five wretched men, to die in the evening light. Helpless they stood there, ringed round with triumphant foes.

Joshua called to him his captains, and bade those who held the beaten kings cast them down with their faces to the earth. "Come near," he said to the captains of Israel, "put your feet upon the

necks of these kings." One by one the victorious soldiers trampled on the broken pride of Canaan; and when the last insult had been given, Joshua spake once more. "Fear not," he said, "nor be dismayed: thus shall Jehovah do to all the enemies against whom ye fight." So the five kings were slain there, and their bodies were hanged upon trees in the sight of all the host, until the sun went down. Then the poor clay was taken and cast into the cave that had been but a trap, and great stones were piled upon the mouth of the cave as a memorial of Israel's triumph.

And now the host of Israel went from victory to victory. Not a city, nor a tribe of the south country of Palestine was able to stand before them. Makkedah, Libnah, Lachish, Hebron, Eglon, all these and many more fell before Joshua, until all the land of the south was subdued, and none was left to lift sword or spear against the conquerors.

Far in the north the kinglets of Hermon and Gennesaret and the merchants of Phœnicia heard of the terror that was devastating the southland; and they gathered themselves together, a mighty host, like the sand of the sea-shore for multitude, to make war against Israel; and the place of their encampment was far to the north by the little lake under the slopes of Hermon that men call the Waters of Merom. Joshua was ware of this new enemy, and marching swiftly northwards, he fell upon the army of the northern kings as they camped by the lakeside, and drove them in utter rout, westwards, even to the shore of the Great Sea, and eastwards to Mizpeh. All their cities he took, destroying and burning, until at last, from Lebanon to the land of Edom, the whole country was laid waste with fire and sword. Not even the Anakims of the mountains, the big men before whom the spies of Israel had trembled in bygone days, were able to withstand his might. They and their cities were destroyed together. Only a handful of them escaped to the cities of Philistia, and found refuge in Gaza, in Gath, and in Ashdod.

So the tide of conquest swept over the Land of Promise, and the captured land was divided among the tribes according to the word of the Lord that He spake to His servant Moses. And the land had rest from war.

A True Man's Last Testament

After conquest came settlement. The land that the children of Israel had won by God's help and their own swords was divided among them, and each tribe settled down in its own heritage. But six cities in the land were set apart for a special purpose that is worthy of remembrance. They were called Cities of Refuge, and they were set apart that any man who had slain a fellow man by accident and with no evil intent in his heart towards him might flee to the nearest of them, and find shelter there from the pursuit of the dead man's friends. When the slayer reached the City of Refuge the citizens were bound to receive him until his case had been tried. Then, if he were found guilty of wilful murder, he was handed over to the friends of the slain man to be put to death; but if he were acquitted of evil intent, and the slaying were proved to be accidental, he was permitted to dwell within the City of Refuge in perfect security. Only one condition was exacted of him. On no account was he to leave the city, so long as the High Priest, during whose time of office the slaying happened, lived; and if he broke this law the avenger of the dead man's blood was free to slay him wherever he might find him. But the death of the High Priest cancelled all the past, and whenever that happened the man-slayer was free to return to his own home unmolested.

Thus justice was tempered with mercy, and a clear line was drawn between crime and misadventure. Three cities were chosen on the east side of Jordan—Golan in the land of Bashan to the north, Ramoth in Gilead midway, and Bezer on the edge of the wilderness to the south. On the western side they chose Kedesh in the land of Galilee to the north, Shechem, in the midst of the land, and Hebron, near Abraham's old camping ground to the south. So the whole land, both east and west, was dotted over with these merciful cities, that no innocent man whose life was in danger need have far to flee for safety.

And now the time had come when Joshua, like Moses, must leave the people whom he had loved so well and led so bravely, and enter on his rest. He was an hundred and ten years old, and

his had been a hard life of desert wandering and ceaseless fighting from the day when he followed Moses out of Egypt. God had given him a great work to do for Israel, and now that it was done, and the people had entered into their heritage, it was time for the stout old soldier to sheathe his sword and go to his reward.

Before he died the great captain of Israel called to him all the heads of the tribes, and counselled them as to what they should do when he was gone, bidding them be strong and courageous, since God would be with them, if only they were true to His commandments; and warning them solemnly that, if they were faithless and careless and mixed themselves with the heathen tribes around, God would forsake them, and they would perish out of the land that they had conquered. Then he summoned all the tribes to meet with him at Shechem, and he told them in brief, plain words, such as a plain soldier uses, the story of God's wonderful goodness to them. When he had ended his recital, he bade the people choose, once and for all, between the Lord who had done such great things for them and the heathen gods who were of profit to no man. "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve," he cried; "but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

"God forbid," answered the men of Israel, "that we should forsake the Lord to serve other gods. We, also, will serve the Lord, for He is our God." Earnestly the wise old man warned them that it would be no easy thing to keep the promise that they were so ready to make, and bade them remember the judgments that would come upon them if they proved faithless. And when they renewed their promise and pledged themselves to serve and obey Jehovah, he took a great stone and graved thereon the nation's pledge, and set it up under an oak in Shechem, before the Tabernacle, to be a witness in all time to come of the covenant between Israel and their God.

So the days of Joshua's life came to an end, and the faithful soldier died, and was buried in his own heritage in Mount Ephraim. Such was the influence of his steady courage and faithfulness that his people remained true to the charge he had given them for many a year, even till all the older men who had served under him were dead and gone also. Then carelessness and disobedience

began to creep in among the nation, and after them, as Joshua had warned the people, came judgment and punishment, so that Israel had to pass through times of great trial and misery, as you shall hear.

For it befell that when the hearts of the men of Israel went a-wandering after the false gods of the nations around them, Jehovah no longer helped them, but left them to reap as they had sown. And there came upon them a conqueror from the land of their fathers, the land of Mesopotamia, and he was a fierce man and a cruel, so that men called him Cushan of the Two Evil Deeds. For eight years his yoke lay heavy upon the nation, and then, in their distress, God remembered them once more, and raised up a man to save them. Othniel was his name, and he was the nephew of Caleb, the one man who had stood by Joshua and been faithful and true when the rest of the spies proved themselves cowards in the days of Moses. Othniel fought bravely against the Mesopotamian conqueror and overcame him, and for forty years the land had rest and peace under the rule of this good man.

But when Othniel was dead and gone, the men of Israel forgot the lesson they had learned, and turned again to their foolishness; and Jehovah allowed them once more to fall into the hands of their enemies. For Eglon, King of Moab, made alliance with Israel's ancient foes, Ammon and Amalek, and together these nations overcame God's people; and Eglon ruled over Israel for eighteen years, till there rose up in Israel a man named Ehud, who saved them from the rule of Moab in a grim and bloody fashion. It fell out that the Israelites were sending their regular tribute to their conqueror, and Ehud was chosen to be the chief of those who bare it. He was a left-handed man, and when he made ready to go upon his errand he took a short sword, and girded it upon his right side, beneath his cloak.

The tribute was offered and accepted, and the tribute-bearers went their way; but Ehud turned back again, and sought an audience of King Eglon, saying that he had a secret errand unto him. Then the King bade his guards go out from his presence and leave him with the Israelite messenger, that none but these two should hear the secret; for he knew not that Ehud was armed,

since the left-handed man's sword was girt upon his right side and hidden. Eglon rose from his throne to hear the secret message, and, as the two stood face to face, Ehud drew his sword with his left hand, and thrust the unsuspecting King through with a deadly wound.

Softly he stole from the chamber where the dead man lay in his blood and locked the doors behind him; nor was it before some time had passed that the King's guards discovered that their master had been slain. By that time Ehud was in safety, and had blown the war-trumpet among the hills of Ephraim, and gathered an army. Swiftly he led them down upon the Moabites while they were yet in amazement at the death of their lord, and in the battle the men of Moab, surprised and leaderless, were utterly routed and ten thousand of them were slain. Thus it befell that by a cruel act of treachery Israel was delivered from the power of Moab, and for eighty years the land had peace.

(2) THE WOMAN WHO SAVED ISRAEL

NE might have thought that Israel would have learned wisdom by all the repeated miseries that came upon them when they forsook the God of their fathers and turned to false gods, but it was not so. No sooner was the strong hand of the deliverer relaxed by death, than Israel turned again to folly; and so it happened again and again. After the deaths of Ehud and of Shamgar, who followed him as ruler of Israel, the old story repeated itself again, and, for their sins, the Israelites fell under the yoke of a cruel lord. Jabin, King of the Canaanites, was his name. He dwelt in Hazor in the north country, and his chief captain was Sisera of Harosheth. For twenty years his hand lay heavy on God's people, and none dared face the nine hundred chariots of iron that were the main strength of his great army.

Twenty years of misery and oppression, however, had taught the Israelites the folly of their ways, and when they repented and cried to Jehovah for help, He sent deliverance to them in a strange

way: for the saviour whom He raised up for His people was no mighty champion or prudent captain, but a noble woman, with a heart of fire and a poet's utterance. Deborah was her name, and she was wedded to a man named Lapidoth, whose one title to a place in his nation's history is that he had gained so noble a wife. Such was her fame in the land for wisdom that, in these days of oppression, when there was no ruler in Israel, all men brought their causes to her for judgment; and she sat under a palm-tree in Mount Ephraim and gave justice to all who sought her rede.

And when the fulness of God's time was come, she sent a messenger to the man whom she had chosen as the fittest to lead the host of the Lord, Barak, "the Lightning," son of Abinoam, of the tribe of Naphtali, bidding him come to her. The stout soldier obeyed her summons, and when he stood before the woman-judge of Israel, she gave him the command with which God had inspired her. "This is the word of the Lord God," she said: "'Gather thou ten thousand men of thine own tribe of Naphtali, and of the tribe of Zebulun, and lead them to Mount Tabor. And I will entice after thee to the river Kishon, Sisera, the captain of Jabin's host, with all his chariots and his great army; and there I will give them into thine hand.'"

Barak was a good man and a valiant, but he felt that such a task needed a wiser head then his. He was ready to be the sword to smite the foe, but Deborah must be the brain to plan the battle. "If thou wilt go with me," he said, "then I will go; but if thou wilt not go with me, I will not go." "Surely," she answered, "I will go with thee; yet, since thy spirit is not great enough to bear the burden alone, the greatest honour of the victory shall not fall to thee, for the Lord shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman."

So these two journeyed together to Kedesh in Galilee, the home of Barak, and thence Barak sent swift runners through the two tribes, bidding all men to the trysting-place. Soon ten thousand warriors were gathered at Kedesh and they marched to Mount Tabor, with Deborah and Barak at their head. Ere long word was brought to Sisera of this muster of his foes, and he gathered a mighty army, with all the chariot brigade in which he put his trust, and with a mighty power he marched to the mouth of the

Plain of Esdraelon, where the river Kishon runs down from the hills towards the Great Sea.

From the slopes of Tabor, Deborah and Barak, with their ten thousand, watched the long Canaanite line defiling through the valley at their feet; and as they watched the march of that great army, lo! they saw that Jehovah had kept His promise and given their oppressor into their hands. For a great storm broke upon the hills, till every brook was hurrying down red and foaming to join the rushing Kishon. Swiftly the river rose and spread its waters over the plain, till the firm ground became a swamp where Sisera's iron chariots laboured in the mire, and were bogged in utter confusion. "Up," cried Deborah to Barak as they watched the drenched and toiling mass, "for this is the day in which Jehovah hath delivered Sisera into thine hand. Is not Jehovah gone out before thee?"

Down the hillside Barak and his ten thousand came rushing, strong men of the mountain, light and swift of foot, a flood of spears and swords to finish what the flood of waters had begun. They smote the flank of the labouring Canaanite host, and dashed it into utter ruin. Before their fierce onset the whole line broke and fled, each man eager only to save himself. Sisera leaped from his chariot, where it lay mired to the axles, and fled, like the rest, on foot; and the wild torrent of pursuers and pursued went roaring down the valley. Never was there such a rout; for of all the mighty host that followed Sisera that morning, there was not a man left to fight.

The beaten captain fled northwards for his life to where the black tents of Heber the Kenite were pitched in the plain of Zaanaim. For Heber had separated himself from the rest of the clan of Kenites who had followed the fortunes of Israel, and Sisera weened that he would find safety in this lonely camp, since there was peace between his king and the wanderer. Wearily he drew near to the tents, and as he came, Jael, the wife of Heber, came forth to meet him. Fairly and courteously she greeted the fugitive. "Turn in, my lord," she said, "turn in to me, and have no fear." Gladly he heard the words of welcome and entered the tent, little dreaming of the guile that was in the heart of the

woman who had spoken him so fair. Spent and fordone he laid him down, and Jael covered his weary limbs with a cloak. "Give me, I pray thee," he said, "a little water to drink; for I am thirsty." His treacherous hostess brought him the sour milk that the Arabs drink, and he drank and was refreshed; then he laid him down again to rest.

Ere he turned to sleep he besought Jael to keep watch over him. "Stand in the door of the tent, and if any man come and ask thee, 'Is there a man here?' then thou shalt answer, 'No.'" The heavy sleep of the exhausted fell upon him, and he slumbered, never to wake again. For, as he slept, Jael took a sharp tent pin, and the heavy mallet that her husband used to drive it home in the ground. Softly and silently she crept to the sleeping man and stooped over him, holding the tent pin close to his temple. Then with swift blow upon blow she drove it home through skull and brain, till she had pinned her victim to the earth. So the great captain of the Canaanites perished miserably, as Deborah had foretold, by the hand of a treacherous woman.

It was not long before Barak came in sight, pressing hotfoot on the track of his beaten enemy. Once more Jael came forth from that grim tent to greet the victor as she had greeted the vanquished. "Come," she said, "and I will show thee the man whom thou seekest." She led him into the tent, and there, cold and dead, lay the great enemy of Israel, with the tent pin driven through his skull. So God cast down Jabin of Canaan beneath the feet of His people; and Israel broke the power of their oppressor with blow after blow, until the King himself was destroyed before them, as his captain had been.

In that great day of triumph, Deborah sang this song:

"*For that the leaders of Israel led them,*
For that the people did give themselves freely,
Bless ye Jehovah.
Hearken, O Kings; and give ear, O ye princes,
Unto the Lord, to Jehovah of Israel,
Praise will I offer.
Lord, when from Seir and from Edom thou wentest,

Trembled the earth, and the heavens were shaken,
Pouring forth water.
Lo, at the sight of Jehovah of Israel,
Trembled the mountains, yea even great Sinai,
Sinai was shaken.
Then came the dark days of Shamgar and Jael,
Caravans ceased from the highroad, and travellers
Journeyed through byways.
Vacant the villages, silent the rulers,
Till I arose, as a mother in Israel,
I, the deliverer.
Strange gods were followed; war rang in the gateways,
Nor 'mong the thousands of Israel's warriors
Was spear or shield seen.
Warm is my heart towards the rulers of Israel,
Willingly offering their strength to the people.
Bless ye Jehovah!
Chiefs of the nation that ride on white asses,
Wayfaring men that tramp by the highroads,
Tell the great story.
Far from the twang of the bow, by the well-side
There shall the tale of God's judgment re-echo,
As through the gates pass God's people, rehearsing
Acts of Jehovah.
Deborah rouse thee, and sing of God's triumph;
Rise up, O Barak, who leadest victorious
Captivity captive.
Down from their hills came the remnant of Israel
Swift at my summons, Jehovah their leader,
Facing the mighty.
Ephraim came, from the mountain of Amalek,
Warriors from Benjamin, rulers from Machir,
Captains from Zebulun.
Fast by my side stood the princes of Issachar;
Barak was with them, as down to the valley
Poured they to battle.
Far by his well-sides sat Reuben, and pondered

Brave resolutions. Why satest thou craven
Still 'mid thy sheepfolds?
Gilead was distant; but Dan, ay, and Asher
Chained to their trading, their ships, and their havens,
Cowered ignoble.
Glory to Zebulun, and glory to Naphtali,
Putting their lives to the hazard for Israel,
Foremost in battle.
So the kings came and the mighty of Canaan
Swift to the strife in the plains of Megiddo,
Little their gain was.
From heaven came our champions, the stars in their courses
Smiting our foeman, while Kishon far-flooding
Swept him to ruin.
Trample, my soul, on the might of thine enemy;
Vain all his trust in the strength of his horses
Stumbling and broken.
Bitter the curse of the Lord upon Meroz,
Craven who came not to aid 'gainst the mighty
The cause of Jehovah.
Bless'd above women be Jael, yea blessed
Far o'er her kindred, the tent-dwelling woman,
None shall be like her.
Water he sought for, and courteous she brought him
Milk for refreshment, and as to a noble
Gave him her service.
Then with the tent pin and hammer she smote him,
Pierced through his temples, and Sisera perished,
Slain by a woman.
Low at her feet lay the mighty, and bowed him,
Low in the dust of death, never to waken,
Beaten and shamed.
From her high lattice his mother is watching;
Heark to her calling—"How long will they tarry,
The wheels of his chariot?"
Softly her damsels reply to console her—
"Surely they linger, dividing among them

Spoil of the vanquished.
Prize of fair maidens to every hero,
And to the captain dyed garments of honour
Shining in splendour!"
So, O Lord God, may thine enemies perish;
But may they be as the sun in his glory
All who do love thee."

So sang Deborah, and her song, as all things are in this imperfect world, was both noble and base—noble in its praise of valour, base in its taunting of a fallen foe. And the land had rest forty years.

(3) THE SWORD OF THE LORD AND OF GIDEON

FORTY years of peace made the Israelites forget the pains that wait on folly. They turned them once again to evil, and for seven years God allowed them to be harried by the Midianites, the wild Arab riders of the eastern desert, that in affliction they might learn wisdom. So savage were the Midianite raids that for fear of them the Israelites forsook their towns and villages, and betook them to dens and caves in the mountains. Each year brought its raid. There was quiet while the men of Israel ploughed and sowed; but so soon as the harvest was growing ripe and ready for the sickle came the great hosts of Midian, with their black tents, their cattle, and their camels, and spread them abroad like grasshoppers over the whole land, sweeping away all the fruit of Israel's labour. Great was the misery and distress of God's people, and the cry of their despair went up to God.

Now in these days of trouble, an Israelite named Gideon, son of Joash, who dwelt at Ophrah, was threshing wheat in a hollow by a wine-press; for men dared not use the threshing-floors on hilltops, lest the Midianites should spy them and rob them of the fruits of their labour. As Gideon swung his flail, he was suddenly aware of a presence by his side. For the angel of the Lord stood

by him and said to him, "The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour." Gideon was in no mood to listen to fair words. "Oh, my Lord," he cried bitterly, "if Jehovah be with us, why then is all this befallen us, and where be all the miracles of which our fathers told us? For Jehovah hath forsaken us and given us into the hands of the Midianites."

Then the Lord looked upon this outspoken man, and answered him, "Go in thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee?" But Gideon hesitated. "Oh, my Lord," he said, "how shall I save Israel? Is not my family poor in Manasseh, and am not I the least in my father's house?" But the Lord answered him, "Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man." "Show me then a sign," said Gideon, "that I may know that Thou favourest me. Depart not, until I have brought Thee mine offering." "I will tarry till thou come again," said the Lord.

Then Gideon ran to his house and brought thence flesh of a kid, and broth, and unleavened cakes, and laid them before his Visitor. "Take the flesh and the cakes," said the Lord, "and lay them upon the rock, and pour out the broth;" and so he did. The divine messenger put forth the rod that was in His hand and touched the offering and lo! fire sprang from the rock and consumed the flesh and the cakes; and therewith the Lord departed from Gideon, leaving him in a great amaze and dread.

Now it was so that even in the household of Gideon's father there was idolatry; for Joash had an altar to Baal, the lord of the Phœnicians, and beside it stood a sacred pole. God sent a vision to Gideon that same night bidding him overthrow the altar, and cut down the sacred pole, and build an altar to Jehovah, making the wood of the pole serve as fuel for the sacrifice to the God of Israel. Gideon raised ten men of his father's household, and ere the night was past, the altar of Baal was overthrown, and an altar to Jehovah stood in its stead, with a sacrifice smoking on it, while the totem pole of Baal had been hewn down and split into billets to feed the altar fire.

The men of Ophrah awoke, and saw this strange sight, and were much dismayed. When they learned who it was that had

thus made a mock of their new god, they came angrily to Joash, bidding him bring out Gideon to them, that he might be put to death for his insult to the majesty of Baal. But Joash, though he had yielded to idolatry, was yet no fool. "Put to death," he answered scornfully; "if there be a man of you who will stand up for Baal, let him rather be put to death. A God who cannot avenge his own wrongs! Let Baal plead for himself." The men of Ophrah were shrewd enough to see the common sense of the words of Joash, and there was no more talk of avenging Baal. From that day Joash called his son by a new name, "Jerubbaal," "let Baal plead," and men looked to the daring young man as a leader.

And now God put into Gideon's heart the thought that the time was come for action against his nation's foes. His war-trumpet was sounded, and all the men of his father's clan gathered behind him. Runners were sent to all the tribes around, Manasseh, Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali, and soon their fighting men came streaming across the hills to the trysting-place. Before he staked all on the hazard of battle, the leader wished to be sure that Jehovah was with him. "Lo!" he said, "I will put a fleece of wool on the threshing-floor; and if there be dew on the fleece only, while the ground is dry, I shall know that Thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as Thou hast said." The fleece was laid on the hard earth, and in the morning the earth around was dry and dusty, but Gideon wrung a bowlful of water out of the fleece.

Even yet he was not satisfied. "Be not angry with me," he said, "and I will speak but this once. When I lay out the fleece again let it be dry, while on all the earth around there is dew." Once more the fleece was spread, and next morning when Gideon came forth, behold! the dew, but the fleece was dry. So Gideon knew that the promise of Jehovah stood.

The new leader mustered his army, and marched with thirty-two thousand men to cut off the great host of Arab raiders which had crossed the Jordan and come, burning and ravaging, up the Vale of Jezreel to its western end. Gideon led his men to the northern slope of Mount Gilboa, and halted them on the hillside, a little above the spot where a spring, which was that day to earn a new and unenviable name, breaks forth, broad and deep, from

the mountain flank. They looked across the upper end of the Vale of Jezreel to the hill of Moreh on its northern side, and between them and the hill, covering the valley beneath with endless rows of tents, lay the great Arab army under the banners of Oreb and Zeeb, "The Raven" and "The Wolf."

Many an Israelite heart sank as the vast numbers of the enemy were revealed. The idea of attacking such an army with the force that followed Gideon seemed madness; and, when the leader sent the heralds round with the proclamation that was made in the ranks of every Israelite army before battle, "Whoso is fearful and afraid, let him return and depart," twenty-two thousand of the little army shouldered their spears and slunk away to the rear. The shame of that day lived for ever in the new name that was given henceforth to the spring by the Israelite camp, "The Well of Harod" it was called, or "The Well of Trembling."

Ten thousand stout-hearted men stood still with their leader on Mount Gilboa. But God had His own plan for the battle, and victory was not to be won by numbers. "The people that are with thee," said the Lord to Gideon, "are yet too many. Bring them down to the water, and I will test them for thee there." Gideon gave the command, and the little army, willingly enough, marched down to the bank of the spring that lay between them and the Arab camp. "Bid them drink," said the Lord, "and watch them while they drink. Mark the men who drink warily, snatching a little water in the palm of the hand, and lapping it; and mark the men who drink unwarily, throwing themselves down on their knees to quench their thirst to the full."

So it was done. Three hundred men alone drank with caution; the rest flung themselves down and drank their fill, careless of the foe beyond the stream. "By these three hundred," said the Lord, "will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thine hand: let all the rest go to their tents." Again there was a rearward march, not of cowards this time, but of men who grumbled that they were not allowed to fight, but who yet were not cool and collected enough for the work that was to come; and Gideon was left with three hundred men to face an host.

Small wonder if he felt some doubt and hesitation that evening,

as he waited the hour to carry out the attack. But God roused him with a fresh promise. "Arise, get thee down unto the host: for I have delivered it into thine hands. But if thou art afraid, take thy servant Phurah, and go down and hearken to what thine enemies are saying, and thine hands shall be strengthened for thy task." So in the darkness they two stole down the hillside to where the Arabs lay encamped in the valley. A fearsome sight was that mighty host, men like grasshoppers for multitude, camels as numberless as the sand by the sea-shore; yet Gideon and Phurah crept in among the outposts, and listened with all their ears, holding their breath. Two Arab warriors were talking together, and they were ill at ease. "I dreamed a dream last night," said one of them. "Behold, a cake of barley bread came tumbling into our host, and struck one of our tents, so that it fell and lay along the ground." His comrade had not much comfort for him. "An ill omen," he said. "This is nothing but the sword of Gideon, a man of Israel; for God hath delivered all the host into his hand."

Gideon waited for no more; he had heard what he wanted, and knew that through all that vast army was spreading already the most dreadful of enemies,—panic-fear. The harvest was ripe for the sickle. Back he crept to his three hundred. "Up," he cried to them, "for God hath given your foes into your hand." So he divided his little army into three troops, a hundred men in each; to every man he gave a trumpet, an empty pitcher, and a torch—the pitcher to screen the flare of the torch until the right time. Each man had his orders, and knew what to do. "Mark me," said Gideon, "and do as I do when ye come to the skirts of the enemy's camp. When ye hear my trumpet blow, then blow ye your trumpets on every side of the camp, and shout, 'The sword of the Lord and of Gideon.'"

So the stout three hundred crept down to their stations around the Midianite camp. It was the dead of night. The guard had newly been relieved, and the new sentries had come to their posts new wakened from sleep, cold, and ill at ease. Suddenly the shrill blast of Gideon's trumpet smote their ears. In a moment three hundred torches flared out before the dazzled eyes of the bewildered sentries, while a great shout went up on every side—

JEPHTHAH'S DAUGHTER.
(Judges, xi, 34–40.)

"The sword of the Lord and of Gideon." Stunned and terror-stricken, in their terror taking the torch-bearers for the leaders of a great army, the Arabs had no thought of fight. Each man thought only of his own safety, each fled for his life, and when he met an armed man, struck at him in blind fear, never dreaming that it was a comrade that he smote. The great host dissolved into a torrent of panic-stricken fugitives, and the pursuit went roaring down the Vale of Jezreel towards the fords of Jordan.

Gideon had laid his plans for such a chance. His swift runners had summoned the men of Ephraim. "Come down against the Midianites and hold the fords of the river." So when the great stream of fleeing men poured down the slope and splashed through the fords, they were met, as they struggled to the eastern bank, by merciless ranks of swordsmen and spearsmen. Great was the slaughter, and Jordan ran red with Arab blood. The two chiefs of the raiding host, the Raven and the Wolf, were taken as they passed the fords. Short was their shrift, for the Raven was slain at the Raven's crag, and the Wolf at the Wolf's wine-press, and the two gory heads were carried over Jordan to Gideon as he came in hot pursuit to the western bank.

But the men of Ephraim, even in their hour of triumph, had a grudge against Gideon. "Why hast thou served us thus?" they said angrily, "that thou didst not call us to the main battle, but only to the chase?" "Nay," answered the victorious captain, crafty as he had been bold, "what have I done compared with you? Surely the very gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim has been better than all the vintage of Abiezer. God has given the Raven and the Wolf into your hands. What is my achievement against yours?" And at that prudent flattery the hearts of the men of Ephraim were turned from their anger.

Not yet, however, was Gideon content. He and his three hundred passed the fords of Jordan and pressed onwards after their foes, weary with the long chase, but still keen to pursue. For a little they halted as they came to the town of Succoth, and their leader called the headmen of the town. "I pray you," he said, "give bread to my men; for they are faint with hunger, and we are pursuing the kings of Midian, Zebah and Zalmunna." The men

of Succoth looked scornfully at the little company. "Are Zebah and Zalmunna already in thine hand," they said, "that we should give bread to thine army?" Gideon had no time to waste in argument, though his heart was hot within him. He said but one grim word. "Therefore, when Jehovah hath given Zebah and Zalmunna into mine hand I will tear your flesh with the thorns and briers of the wilderness."

Forward went the three hundred once more on the track of their fleeing enemies, and ere long they came to Penuel. Once more Gideon made his request for bread; but the men of Penuel were cravens like their fellows of Succoth, and gave him a like answer. Short and bitter was the captain's judgment on the cowardly time-servers. "When I come again in peace," he said, "I will break down this tower of yours that is your pride;" and again the three hundred turned to the chase.

Zebah and Zalmunna had fled far to the eastward, with the miserable fragment of the great Arabian army. Fifteen thousand only were left, and the corpses of one hundred and twenty thousand fighting men were strewed all the way from Gilboa, but in their refuge at Karkor the fugitives deemed themselves beyond the reach of pursuit. Suddenly, like a thunderbolt, Gideon and his men fell upon them and scattered them once more to the four winds of heaven. The two chiefs fled again from the rout of their host, but not even Arab swiftness could save them from the tireless persistence that was avenging seven years of misery. Zebah and Zalmunna were taken, and with his captives, spared only for the moment, Gideon turned westwards. There was work to be done upon recreant Israelites before the chiefs of Midian met their doom.

Succoth was the first to reap the reward of its insolence and faithlessness. As Gideon's troops drew near the town they lighted upon a young man of the place and held him fast, till he had named and described to them the headmen of the town, seventy and seven men. Gideon's fierce summons brought them to the gate in a very different frame of mind from that which they had shown on his last visit. The captain of Israel waved his hand to where the two Arab chiefs stood, sullen and dejected, by their camels. "Behold," he said, "here are Zebah and Zalmunna, con-

cerning whom ye taunted me, saying, 'Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in thine hand, that we should give bread unto thy weary men?'" His men had armed themselves with branches of thorn and brier, and when the threshing which he had promised was done, it was seventy-seven very sore and bleeding headmen who slunk in at their city gate, with the lesson firmly impressed upon their scratched and bruised bodies that men who wish to be insolent ought first to be quite sure that they are insulting the weaker side.

This was but grim humour, and Succoth had well deserved the rough horse play by which Gideon shewed his scorn. Penuel met with a sterner fate, why, we cannot tell. Not only was her tower broken down, as Gideon promised, but her men were slain as well.

And now came the hour of doom for the Arab chiefs. A fresh grudge had nerved Gideon's arm in the battle. There was a blood-feud between him and Zebah and Zalmunna; and it was as the avenger of blood that he had pressed so relentlessly upon their track. The time of his vengeance was at hand—sweet to the fierce soldier's soul. "What manner of men," he said quietly to his cowering captives, "were they whom ye slew at Tabor?" It may be that some faint hope that flattery might help them stirred in the hearts of the doomed men. At least they fawned and cringed under the pitiless eyes that watched them. "Great lord," they said, "as thou art, so were they; each one of them fashioned like a king." Poor fools, they had but added fuel to Gideon's fire of hatred. "They were my brethren," he said, "my mother's sons. By the life of Jehovah, if ye had spared them then, I would not slay you now."

Jether, Gideon's eldest son, stood beside his father. "Up, slay them!" said Gideon to the boy. But Jether stood irresolute, his young heart not yet hardened to such wild justice. Then Zebah and Zalmunna plucked up spirit to face inevitable death like men. Die they must—better to die like warriors, by the hand of a warrior, than to fall like slaves by the sword of a boy or a servant. "Rise thou and slay us," they pled, "for as the man is, so is his strength." So Gideon drew his sword once more, and wiped out blood with blood; and for a sign of his vengeance, he took from

the necks of the dead men's camels the golden crescents that had marked where the leaders of the Arab hosts rode.

So ended the days of Arab dominion in the land, and Israel had forty years of peace under Gideon's strong hand. Fain would the men of Israel have made a king of their victorious leader; but Gideon had no hankering for a crown. "Neither I nor my son shall rule over you," he said. "Jehovah shall be your ruler." Well had it been for him and for Israel, had he been as loyal to Jehovah in all things as in this. But the richness of the plunder of Midian tempted him to a great fault that brought woe to him, his family, and all the nation, though it may be that he meant only to honour God the more in what he did. For he bade the men who had followed him bring each man his share of the golden spoil that had been stripped from the Arab dead and therefrom he made an ephod of gold and set it for worship in his own town of Ophrah.

Well meant his action may have been; but the result was to turn the hearts of Israel to mere idolatry. And out of this, and out of the quarrels and dissensions in Gideon's own family, came great troubles and disasters to the nation when he was dead and gone, so that the story of the years that followed his death is but one of murder, treachery, and idolatry, profitable to no man; until at last another strong man arose to guide the erring people.

(4) A FOOLISH VOW

NOW the manner of his coming was this. The fickle minds of the Israelites had turned aside to false gods without number, and in anger Jehovah had forsaken them. Then the Philistines on the west and the men of Ammon on the east raided and oppressed them year by year for eighteen long years, so that no man knew whither to turn in his misery. And when they cried unto Jehovah, He bade them pray to the false gods for whom they had deserted Him. Yet His heart was sore for the trouble of His people, and in mercy He sent them a champion.

Northwards, in the skirts of Lebanon, there dwelt an outlaw chief

SAMSON AT THE MILL.
(Judges, xvi, 21.)

named Jephthah, with a band of broken men. He was the son of a man of Gilead; but his half-brothers had cast him out, because he was born of an outlandish woman. Yet because he was a mighty man of war, and because the terror of Ammon lay sore upon Israel, the chiefs of the land sent to him and besought him to be their captain, and to lead them against the raiders. Jephthah gave them a bitter answer: "When all was well with you, ye drove me from my father's house; now in your distress ye are fain to seek me!" Neither would he be their leader until they had sworn before Jehovah to make him prince and captain over Gilead.

Then for a space heralds came and went between Ammon and Israel, and argued and wrangled over the claims and rights of the two nations to the land, but it was all to no purpose; and at last Jephthah saw that the sword must judge between the two peoples. So he gathered his army to face the men of Ammon in the field. But before he went out to battle, he made a vow to Jehovah—a foolish and ignorant vow, for he was half-heathen by birth, and had grown up amidst idolatry, and knew little of the heart of God. "If Thou wilt surely give me the victory over Ammon," he said, "then, whatever comes forth from my house-door to meet me as I return in triumph, I will offer it as a burnt-sacrifice to Thee."

So the battle was joined, and the men of Ammon fled before the sword of the outlaw from Lebanon. He swept them before him from Aroer to Minnith and the Plain of the Vineyards, and all the way past twenty townships, their dead were strewn thick. The pride of Ammon was humbled, and the champion of Gilead returned triumphant to his home at Mizpeh. As he drew near to the house, the door was flung open, and a little company of happy girls came forth, dancing and playing on timbrels to greet the victor; and at their head was Jephthah's daughter—his only child. When he saw that sight, all the pride of his victory fell from him, and in his agony he rent his cloak in twain; for he remembered his hasty vow before the battle. "My child," he groaned, "thou hast brought me low indeed; for I have spoken before the Lord, and my oath I cannot break."

Then he told her what he had sworn in his folly, and the girl answered him bravely. "My father," she said, "since the oath is

sworn, and Jehovah has given the men of Ammon to thy sword, keep thou thine oath, and do with me as thou hast said. Only one thing I ask: since love, and wedlock, and the joy of motherhood shall never be mine, let me go for two months with my companions to mourn on the mountains."

So for two months the girl and her girl friends dwelt among the hills, and sorrowed for all that might have been and would not be: then she came back to her stricken father, and the vow, sinful in the making, more sinful still in the keeping, was fulfilled. And from that day it grew to be the custom that the maidens of Israel should go to the hills four days each year, to talk with the spirit of Jephthah's brave daughter.

(5) THE CHAMPION OF ISRAEL

JEPHTHAH passed to his rest when he had ruled Israel for six years, and after him came other judges, Ibzan, and Elon, and Abdon. But once more the hearts of the men of Israel turned to the gods of the heathen; and the Philistines of the sea-coast overcame them, and oppressed them for forty long years. Now there was a man named Manoah, of the town of Zorah, in the tribe of Dan, and it befell that the messenger of Jehovah appeared to his wife and said to her: "Thou hast no child, but behold, a son shall be given unto thee. He shall be sacred to Jehovah; never shall his head be shorn; and he shall strike the first strokes of Israel's deliverance from the Philistines."

So the child was born, and Manoah and his wife called him Samson, "The Man of the Sun," and he grew up strong and fearless, so that all men saw that God's hand was upon him. Now, when he was come to his manhood, he saw a fair Philistine girl in Timnath, and prayed his father that he might wed her. "Is there never a woman among the daughters of Israel," said Manoah, "that you must needs wed a heathen Philistine?" But Samson would take no denial, and he and his father and mother went down to Timnath to ask the maiden in marriage. As he drew

near to Timnath, a young lion sprang out upon him, roaring, from the vineyards; but with his bare hands Samson caught the beast, and rent his jaws asunder as he might have rent a kid, and left him dead among the vines.

Many days after, he came down by the same way to claim his bride, and as he passed the spot, he turned aside to see where the lion lay. Naught was left of it but the white bones, and within them a swarm of bees had made their honeycombs. So Samson gathered the honey, and came back with it to his father and mother, and they ate it as they journeyed.

Now the wedding-feast was set, and thirty young men of the Philistines feasted with Samson and his bride for seven days, and riddles were being asked and answered round the table. Then Samson bethought him of his lion and the honeycomb. "Here is my riddle," he said. "If you can find the answer to it before our feast ends, I will give each man of you a shirt and a change of clothing; and if you fail, each man of you shall give the same to me." "So be it," they said. "Let us hear the riddle." And Samson spoke a little verse:

"From the devourer came forth meat,
And sweetness out of the strong."

So the thirty young men puzzled over the riddle, and, finding no answer by fair means, resolved to have one by foul. They came to the bride and said: "Did you ask us to your wedding only to rob us? Find us the answer, or we shall burn the house over your head, and you with it!" So with tears and entreaties she wearied her husband till at last she wheedled the answer out of him; and when the seventh day came, the Philistines said:

"Sweeter than honey—what?
Or more than a lion in strength?"

Grimly Samson looked on them and on his young wife. "If ye had not plowed with my heifer," he said, "ye had not found out my riddle." In hot anger he went to Ashkelon of the Philistines, slew thirty men, and stripped their bodies. Then he flung the blood-stained garments before those unlucky riddle-seekers, and,

turning his back in scorn upon his wife, went to his own home alone.

Samson's wrath, quick to come, was quick to go, and after a while his heart turned to his young wife again. But when he came to Timnath, lo, she was wedded to one of the thirty. "Who shall blame me," he swore to himself, "if I harm these bargain-breakers?" So he planned a strange vengeance. Trapping three hundred jackals, he tied them two and two by the tails, and fastened a torch to each pair of tails; then, lighting the torches, he turned the terrified brutes loose among the harvest fields, and the fire swept over field and vineyard alike. Great was the rage of the Philistines; and when they learned that they owed their loss to Samson, they burned his wife and her father in revenge. "Two can play at killing," said Samson; "my hand shall not rest till my vengeance is complete." So he slew till he was weary, and when the slaying was over he made him a stronghold in a cleft in the rock Etam, and there he dwelt like an outlaw.

The men of Judah sought him there, for the Philistines were ravaging their lands in vengeance for the slaughter he had made. Three thousand of them climbed to his cave and reproached him bitterly. "What madness made thee provoke the Philistines, our masters?" "Nay," he said, "they and I are but quits." Yet when the three thousand pledged themselves not to slay him, he let them bind him to deliver him into the hands of his enemies; and loud was the shout of joy among the Philistines when they saw him bound and helpless. But at the sound of their triumph, Samson put out his giant strength: the ropes fell from his arms like burnt flax, and catching the first weapon he could lay hands upon (it was the jawbone of an ass that had fallen by the wayside), he rushed upon his foes, and chased them before him in wild rout until he had slain a thousand of them.

For twenty years, in the pride of his manhood, Samson was the champion of Israel; but he was rash and careless as he was brave and strong. In mere madness of pleasure seeking he went one day into one of the strongholds of his foes—Gaza that lies by the shore of the Great Sea. The guard knew him, and when he had passed the gates they shut and barred them, counting that they

had trapped the lion and could slay him in the morning. At midnight Samson rose to leave the city; and when he came to the barred gates, he bent his mighty strength to the posts and plucked them from their sockets, and, throwing gates, bars, and posts across his broad shoulders, bore them to the top of a hill near Hebron, and flung them down in scorn.

Yet the man before whom all men trembled was but a child in the hands of an evil woman. Such an one he met and loved. She dwelt in the valley of Sorek, and her name was Delilah. His enemies knew of his madness, and they bribed the traitress with a great sum of money to find the secret of his strength. Samson knew that he was bought and sold; but in the pride of his might he mocked at the danger. Three times he fooled the woman with false tales of where his power lay; three times she betrayed him; and three times he burst the bonds with which she had bound him, and jeered at his would-be captors and their tool. But he could not break from the passion that bound him to a false woman, though he knew her to be false; and at last, wearied to death with her persistence, he told her the secret. "I have been vowed to Jehovah from the day of my birth; and never has my hair been shorn. If once my locks were cut, my strength would leave me." With evil haste Delilah sent to the Philistine lords. "Come with speed: this time he has told me all."

So the Philistines came and paid her price to the traitress, and set their trap. Delilah lulled her fool to sleep with soft words and caresses, and as he lay she had his long, fair hair shorn, and with it went his strength. She cried into his drowsy ear, as she had cried before, "The Philistines be upon thee, Samson." And the big, easy dupe awoke and stretched his great limbs. "The old game," he said. "I have but to shake myself and I shall be free." But this time it was different, for God had left him. His foes sprang from their ambush and bore him down and bound him. They thrust out his eyes, and hurried the blinded giant down to Gaza, where he once had mocked them; and there in the prison the champion of Israel, sightless and laden with fetters, ground corn with a quern, as though he had been a slave woman.

Drearily the time passed away; and at last it fell on a day that

the Philistine lords were minded to make a great sacrifice to their god Dagon in honour of their triumph over Samson. Round the hideous image they marched, chanting a song of victory:

"Our God hath given him to our hand,
The foe of our land,
Who multiplied our slain."

Then they bethought them of a new pleasure. "Bring forth Samson," they cried, "that he may make sport for us." So the blind giant was brought forth, and led into the space before the portico of the temple, that all might see him mocked at and made a laughing-stock. Now the portico was filled below with the Philistine lords, and on its roof was a great crowd of the commoner folk, and the roof was held up by two great, wooden pillars, resting upon flat, stone bases, after the manner of the Philistines and the island-folk from whom they sprang. For a while they sated themselves with mockery, laughing their fill at the clumsy movements of the blind hero; nor did they concern themselves to mark that his hair was grown again, nor to consider what that might mean.

When all were weary of mocking, they gave him grace to rest himself awhile between the twin pillars of the portico, and a young lad led him to his resting-place. Then said Samson to his guide, "Put my hands on the pillars that hold up the house, that I may lean on them;" and the boy guided the great hands of the blind giant till they grasped the cedar beams; and the crowd looked on, nor dreamed of what was about to befall. And Samson spoke, not to his foes, but to the God who had forsaken him. "Lord God," he prayed, "remember me,—strengthen me, O God, only this once, that I may have swift vengeance on the Philistines for my two eyes."

In the portico and above it, no man noticed the crooking of the great hands upon the pillars, or the straining of the mighty sinews. But all at once there came from the blind champion a great cry—"Let me die with the Philistines;" and with that word he bowed his shoulders, and with one great heave he swept the cedar pillars from their stone bases. One moment of horror as the crowd above and below saw the beams moving sideways; then a tempest of

shrieks and a mighty crash, and the house of Dagon fell in ruin upon all the chosen of Philistia, and upon the man who had gained his freedom at last.

So died Samson, and with him three thousand of the men of Gaza, so that he slew more, dying, than ever he had slain in his life. His brethren and kindred came down, and found his body, and bore it back through the silent streets of the Philistine city, where none dared stay them. And they buried the champion of Israel in his father's tomb, on the quiet hillside between Zorah and Eshtaol.

(6) RUTH THE MOABITESS

NOW, in those dark days when the Judges ruled in Israel, there befell a great famine in the land. And a man of Bethlehem in the land of Judah, whose name was Elimelech, sought refuge in the land of Moab, beyond Jordan; and with him went his wife Naomi, and his two sons, Mahlon and Chilion. After a time Elimelech died in that strange land, and Naomi was left with her two sons. Mahlon and Chilion wedded women of Moab, Orpah and Ruth by name; but ere long the young men both died, and Naomi had none to comfort her loneliness in an alien home but the two Moabite widows.

Then came news from over Jordan that there was plenty once more in Palestine; and Naomi's heart grew sick with longing for her native hills. So she set out to return to Bethlehem, and her daughters-in-law went with her to speed her on the way. When the time to part had come, she said to them, "Go back, my daughters, each to her mother's house. God bless you for your kindness to the dead and to me. God give you other husbands and lives of peace." But the women loved Naomi. Weeping, they said, "Surely we will go with thee to thy people." Naomi answered, "Nay, my daughters, why should you waste your lives for my sake? My heart is sore even now for you, because the shadow of my sorrow has fallen upon you." Then Orpah kissed her, and turned sadly homewards; but Ruth clung to her mother-in-law and would not

be denied. "See," said Naomi, "thy sister-in-law has turned to her own people and her own faith. Go thou also with her." And Ruth replied, "Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God; where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me and more also, if aught but death part thee and me."

So Naomi could say no more, and they twain went on together to Bethlehem. A great stir their coming made in the little hill town. The townsfolk gathered round them, asking, "Is this Naomi?" and she answered sadly, "Call me not Naomi (pleasantness), call me Mara (bitterness), for bitterly has the Almighty dealt with me." So the two lonely women dwelt together in Bethlehem. It was the beginning of the barley-harvest when they returned, and all around the reapers and the gleaners were busy and happy in the yellow fields.

Need was that Ruth should find some work that would keep the two alive, and she said to Naomi, "Let me go to the harvest field and glean wherever the master of the field will give me leave;" and Naomi bade her go. Now so it fell out that the field which she chose belonged to a wealthy farmer named Boaz, and he was a near relative of Naomi's dead husband. That day Boaz came down into the field from his house in Bethlehem and cheerily greeted his reapers, and they answered him as heartily, for he was a good man and well thought of by all. His eye caught a new figure among the gleaners, and he said to his steward, "Whose damsel is this?" "It is Naomi's Moabite daughter-in-law," said the steward. "She asked for leave to glean, and has been working since morning."

Boaz called Ruth to him. "Listen, my daughter," said the kindly man. "Glean in no other field but mine. Work with my maidens, and follow my reapers, and none shall harm thee, and drink from my workers' water-jars when thou art thirsty." Ruth bowed low before the good man. "Why such kindness," she said, "to me who am a stranger?" "No stranger, my daughter," he said; "I have heard of all thy goodness to Naomi and how thou

RUTH IN THE HARVEST-FIELD.
(Ruth, ii, 3.)

hast left thine own land for her sake. The God of Israel, under whose wings thou hast found a refuge, reward thee for it." So Ruth thanked him once more, and bent to her task again.

When the hour for the mid-day meal came round he bade her eat of the workers' bread and drink of their sour wine. They gave her parched corn, and when she had eaten enough, she laid the rest aside for Naomi and turned again to her gleaning; and Boaz bade his reapers respect her, and told them to let fall purposely a handful of corn here and there, that her gleaning might be easy. So at evening time she came home well laden with corn, and told her mother-in-law the name of the man with whom she had wrought, and all his goodness to her. "A blessing on him from the Lord," said Naomi, "who is kind to the living as he was to the dead. For this man Boaz is one of our nearest kinsmen." And all through the long harvest days Ruth gleaned in the fields of Boaz among the barley and the wheat.

Now when Naomi spoke of the kinship of Boaz, she had more in her mind than she uttered at the moment. For it was the custom in Israel that when any man died and left no child, his next of kin should marry the widow, that the family and name of the dead should not be blotted out. Harvest was drawing to an end before she told Ruth what was in her heart. "My daughter," she said at last, "fain would I see thee settled and at rest. See, now, our kinsman Boaz winnows his barley tonight at the threshing-floor. Make thee ready and go down thither; but do not show thyself to him till his work is over and he has eaten and drunk."

So Boaz finished his winnowing and supped, and, as men are wont to be after a hard day's work and a good meal, he was well pleased with himself, and went to his sleep beside the winnowed corn with a happy heart. Then, in the darkness, came Ruth, and crouched at her kinsman's feet. In the midst of the night Boaz wakened with a start, and was aware of the woman at his feet. "Who art thou?" he said. "I am thine handmaid Ruth," she answered. "I seek thy guardianship; for thou art near of kin to me." "God's blessing on thee, my daughter," he said, "that thou hast appealed to me, and not gone after young men, poor or rich. Have no fear. I will do my duty by thee, for none in Bethlehem

but knows that thou art a good woman. Yet there is a kinsman nearer to thee than I. Wait till the morning, and if he will use his right, well and good; but if not, then I will take his place."

Then in the grey dawn he filled her veil with six measures of barley, and sent her home to Naomi. And when the two women had talked over all that had befallen, Naomi said: "Bide thou here, my daughter, till we see how matters will go. Be sure that Boaz will not rest until he has settled everything."

So Boaz went to the gate of Bethlehem, and sat him down there; for all the business and the talk of an Eastern town gathered to the gate. And after a while there came by the man who was nearest of kin to Naomi; and Boaz called him to sit by his side. Then he called ten of the fathers of the little town, and they came and sat beside him in the gate. Boaz turned to his kinsman. "Naomi," he said, "who has returned out of Moab, wishes to sell the piece of land which belonged to our kinsman Elimelech. Now the right to buy it is thine, because thou art nearest of kin; and if thou wilt not buy it, tell me here, before the elders of the city, for my right is next after thine." And the man answered, "I will buy the land."

"Nay," said Boaz, "but remember that if thou buyest the land, as next of kin, it falls to thee also to marry Naomi's daughter-in-law Ruth, that so the name of Elimelech and his family may be kept alive in the land." "That I cannot do," said the kinsman, "and therefore I yield my right to thee," and, so saying, he stooped down, and drew off his shoe, and handed it to Boaz. For this was the custom in Israel, that when a man renounced his right to buy his kinsman's land or wed his kinsman's wife, he drew off his shoe, and gave it to him who came nearest after him in the succession.

Then Boaz turned to the elders, and said, "I take you all to witness that I have bought all the land that belonged to Elimelech and his two sons. Moreover I take Ruth the Moabitess, the widow of Mahlon, to be my wife, that the name of the family may be preserved among the brethren of Elimelech." And the elders and the people who stood by said, "We are witnesses;" and they prayed that God might bless Ruth in her new marriage as he had blessed Rachel and Leah in the days of old. So they twain were

wedded, and after a time God gave them a son. And her woman friends who had gathered to see the baby said to his grandmother Naomi: "Praise to God who has given thee this little kinsman. Surely he shall bring thy happy days back again, and comfort thine old age; for his mother loves thee, and has been better to thee than seven sons." And Naomi took her grandson in her arms, and tended him; and in due time they named him Obed, which means "Serving." His son was Jesse, and the son of Jesse was David; and so Ruth became the ancestress of the greatest king of Israel, and later, of One far greater even than David.

(7) THE CHILD WHO WAS GIVEN TO GOD

N the hill country of Ephraim there dwelt a man named Elkanah, and his two wives, Hannah and Peninnah. Peninnah had sons and daughters, but no child had been given to Hannah, and so her heart was sore, for to be childless was reckoned a sore misfortune in Israel. Year by year Elkanah left his home when the feast-time drew nigh, and went up to Shiloh to the sanctuary of God to offer sacrifice. When the sacrifice was over, he and his family feasted together, and because, spite of her childlessness, Hannah was dear to him, he gave her twice as much as he gave to Peninnah or to her children. Yet Hannah would not be comforted, for Peninnah jeered at her and taunted her that she had no child; and her heart was sore within her, and she cared not to eat of the feast. Elkanah tried to cheer her. "Hannah," he said, "why do you weep, and refuse to eat? Be not grieved. Surely I am better to thee than ten sons."

But Hannah rose from the table in bitterness of heart, and went into the tent of the Lord, where Eli the High Priest sat by the door-post; and there she prayed to God, and wept. "O Lord," she said, "if Thou wilt remember me in my sorrow, and give me a son, then I will give him to Thee for all his life." While she was praying, Eli was watching her. He saw her lips moving, but he heard no word, for Hannah's prayer was in her heart; so he

judged rashly and uncharitably that she was drunk with wine. "My daughter," said the old man, "how long wilt thou be drunken? Have done with wine." "Nay," said Hannah, "my spirit is heavy with sorrow; no wine hath passed my lips, but I have been pouring out my soul before God. Think not basely of me, my lord: I have but spoken in the bitterness of a sore heart." Then Eli, a little ashamed of his hasty judgment, bade her go in peace—"And the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of Him."

So Hannah went away from God's House cheered and comforted; and so it fell out that after a time God answered her prayer and gave her a little son, and she called him Samuel, "Asked of God." Then for a while she abode at home, nursing her boy, and left Elkanah and the other to make their yearly journey to Shiloh without her. But all the time her vow was in her heart, and when the boy was perhaps three years old or more, she and her husband went up with him to Shiloh. With them they took an offering of three bullocks, and a measure of flour, and a skin of wine; and so they came to Eli the High Priest. "My lord," said Hannah to the old man, "in very truth I am the woman who stood beside thee here, praying to the Lord. I prayed for this child. God gave him to me, and now I give him to God so long as his life shall last."

So Elkanah and Hannah turned and went home to Ramah, leaving their little son to be the High Priest's servant. Only once a year, when they came up to the feast, Hannah had the chance to see the boy for whom she had yearned so long. For weeks before she would be busy making him a little linen robe, such as the Levites wear who serve the Tabernacle, and putting all the love of her heart into every stitch. Then when it was ready and the feast-time came, she took it with her, and gave it to her son, and kissed him, and turned away homewards again, happy and sad, both at once. And afterwards God gave Hannah other children, three sons and two daughters. And away at Shiloh, Samuel helped the old priest in the work of the Tabernacle, and was loved by everyone, and, best of all, was dear to God.

(8) THE ARK OF JEHOVAH

NOW the High Priest, Eli, whom Samuel served, was a good man himself; but he was old, and gentle with that weak gentleness which is afraid to do justice upon wrong-doing, and his two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, were fierce and dissolute men who brought shame on God's House and on the priesthood. God warned Eli that punishment would come on him and his for their evil-doing; but the old man was too slack and too ease-loving to right the wrong. And so, it may be because of the evil lives of men, God ceased to speak to His people as He was wont to do before.

Now it befell one evening that Eli, whose eyes were growing dim with old age, had laid him down to sleep in the Tabernacle, and the lights on the seven-branched lamp-stand were still burning, and Samuel was just going to his rest, when the young Levite heard the voice of God speaking to him. He knew not that it was the Lord who spoke, but at once he answered, "Here am I," and ran to his old master. "Here am I," he said again, "for thou calledst me." "I did not call," replied Eli; "lie down again." But when Samuel lay down, again the voice sounded in his ears, "Samuel"; and once more he ran to where Eli was sleeping, and said, "Here am I; for thou didst call me." The old man answered, "My son, I called not; lie down again." A third time the mysterious voice called the boy; and when he waked his master again, Eli felt that God was speaking to his young servant. "Go and lie down again," he said, "and if He calls again, answer thou, 'Speak, Lord; for Thy servant heareth.'"

So once again the voice came through the darkness as before, "Samuel, Samuel." And Samuel answered, "Speak; for Thy servant heareth." Then God told him of terrible things that were coming upon Israel, and upon the house of Eli, because of their wickedness—so terrible that the ears of everyone who heard them should tingle at the sound, and that no sacrifice could turn them away. With a troubled heart, Samuel lay still till morning dawned,

then he opened the doors of God's House and went about his daily duties; but he dared not tell Eli what God had said to him. The old man called him at last. "What hath the Lord said to thee, my son?" he said. Samuel could not bear to tell him the truth; but Eli urged him, and at last he told him all. When he heard it, the High Priest quietly said, "It is the Lord: let Him do what seemeth to Him good;" but indeed it had been better for him and his had he thought more of the word of the Lord in earlier days.

For a time the thunder-cloud that hung over Israel did not break; and in these days of waiting for the storm, men came more and more to see that the young Levite of Shiloh was a true prophet of the Lord, and that God was speaking to him and by him.

Now it fell out that war sprang up between Israel and the Philistines, and the hosts went out to battle. And in the fight Israel was beaten, and four thousand men of her array were slain. The elders of the people were sore perplexed. "Why hath God smitten us before the Philistines?" they said. "Let us bring the Ark of the Covenant from Shiloh, that it may give us the victory." So, foolishly, the Ark was brought from its place in the Tabernacle, and Hophni and Phinehas, the two evil sons of Eli, came with it.

When the Ark came into the camp, a great shout went up from all Israel, for they deemed that now the Lord was surely with them. The Philistines heard the shout. "What means this cry in the camp of the Hebrews?" they said. And when they heard of the coming of the Ark their hearts melted for fear. "Their God is come to help them," they cried. "Woe unto us; for this is the God that smote the Egyptians with such sore plagues! Pluck up your courage, ye Philistines, lest ye be slaves to the men of Israel, as they have been to you. Prove yourselves men today, and fight." So the battle was joined; and lo, Israel was routed with a sorer slaughter than before, for thirty thousand Hebrew dead lay on that disastrous field. The Ark itself was captured, and the two sons of Eli died beside it.

Far away in Shiloh the old High Priest sat by the wayside, watching eagerly for news from the army; for his heart trembled for the Ark of the Lord. At last the guards on the city wall saw in the distance a solitary runner; and as he drew near they saw

that he was in evil case,—his clothes torn, dust sprinkled upon his head. He staggered to the gate, and told the bitter tidings; and a great wail of agony went up from all the crowd. At the noise of that cry Eli called for the messenger to be brought before him. So the bearer of ill tidings came where the ancient priest, ninety-eight years old, and blind, sat by the way. Eagerly Eli questioned him, and the man replied, "Israel has fled before the Philistines; great has been the slaughter; thy two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead; and the Ark of Jehovah is taken." When he heard that dreadful word—"the Ark of Jehovah is taken"—Eli fell backwards from his seat, as one that has been stricken with a mortal wound; and his neck broke with the fall, and he died. For forty years he had been judge in Israel.

At the very hour when the tidings came, there was born a son to the dead Phinehas. Vainly the women beside her strove to cheer the widowed mother. She turned her face to the wall. "The glory is departed from Israel," she said. "Call the boy 'Ichabod,' 'there is no glory.'" And so she died.

In their triumph the Philistines took the captured Ark to Ashdod, and set it in the temple of their fish-god Dagon, before the image of the god. But when the priests came to the temple on the morrow, lo! Dagon had fallen from his place, and lay prone before the Ark. They set the fallen god upon his pedestal again; but the next morning they found him grovelling before the Ark once more. This time the fall was past remedy; for as he crashed down upon the threshold of the sanctuary, his head and his hands were broken off, and naught but a stump was left. Moreover a sore pestilence fell upon the people of the city, and many died. So the fear of Jehovah came upon the men of Ashdod, and they hastened to rid themselves of the Ark that smote down gods and men alike. For seven months it was carried hither and thither in the land, to Gath, to Ekron; and whithersoever it came, came also plague and death.

At last they could endure its presence no longer. Their priests and wizards counselled them to send back the Ark to Israel, and to send with it an offering, that the anger of Jehovah might be turned away. Therefore they made a new cart, and thereon they set their

deadly prize of war, and beside it, in a chest, they laid a treasure of gold. They took away the calves from two milch kine that had never been yoked to the plough, and they harnessed the kine to the cart. Then they let the kine choose their own way; and instead of turning to seek their calves, the kine went straight forward along the road to Beth-shemesh, and turned neither to right nor left, though they lowed for the calves as they went. Then the Philistine lords who followed to see what would happen knew that it was the hand of Jehovah that had brought evil upon them, and that they had done wisely to send back the Ark.

The men of Beth-shemesh were reaping their wheat in the valley, and when one and another straightened himself from bowing over the sheaves and looked down the road that led to the Philistine plain, lo! the Ark drew nigh, with the Philistine lords following it afar. The kine drew the cart to the side of a great stone in the field of Joshua, a villager of Beth-shemesh; and the men of the village gathered round it, and shouted for joy. The Levites took down the Ark and placed it and the coffer with the treasure of gold upon the stone; then they brake up the cart, and made a fire of the wood; and the kine they slew and offered them on the fire as a sacrifice to Jehovah. And when they had seen all that was done, the Philistine lords turned back and went home to their cities. But the Ark had brought the plague with it out of Philistia, and many of the men of Beth-shemesh sickened and died.

So the terror of the Ark came upon Beth-shemesh also. They sent messengers bidding the men of Kirjath-jearim come and take it away; and they carried it to the house of Abinadab, on the hill by their town, and set apart his son Eleazar to watch over it, and for twenty years it remained in the Town of the Woods.

Then the men of Israel sought the Lord again. And Samuel said, "If your hearts are true towards Jehovah, then put away your false gods and serve the Lord alone, and He will save you from the Philistines." So when the false gods had been cast out, Samuel called all the people together to Mizpeh, and there they fasted, and prayed, and made confession of their sins before God.

But when the Philistines heard of the great assembly, they mustered their host and came up from the Plain by the Great Sea,

to cut off Israel at one blow. In great fear the men of Israel besought Samuel to pray without ceasing that God would save them from the hand of their cruel enemies. Then they went forth to battle, while Samuel offered a lamb in sacrifice to God, and prayed for victory; and God heard his prayer. For just as the hosts clashed together in battle there came a mighty rolling of thunder, and the hearts of the men of Philistia failed them, for they deemed that Jehovah Himself was warring from heaven against them. In panic-fear they fled, and the men of Israel chased them and slew, from Mizpeh even to Beth-car.

In memory of that great deliverance, Samuel took a mighty stone and set it up on the battle-field, and called it "Eben-ezer," "The Stone of Help," for that the Lord had helped his people against their enemies. The power of the Philistines was so broken by the rout at Mizpeh that Israel had rest from strife with them all the days of Samuel, and the old border of the land was restored again, and the cities that the Philistines had captured were set free.

So Samuel spent the years of a long life as ruler over Israel. Year by year he travelled through the land, doing justice between men at Bethel, and Gilgal, and Mizpeh; and ever when the year's circuit was done he came back to the old home of his father and mother at Ramah, where his family altar stood; and there men brought their causes to him for judgment. So the boy who was given to God grew at last to a good old age, and was held in honour of all men.

Part V. *Stories of Israel's Golden Age*

(1) "GIVE US A KING"

THE years passed on, and Samuel's strength began to fail; therefore he made his sons, Joel and Abiah, judges of Israel in his place. But the young men were not like their father; they took bribes and gave unjust judgments for gold. At last their evil-doing grew beyond bearing. The headmen of the tribes came to the old judge at Ramah. "Behold," they said, "thou art old, and thy sons are not like thee. Give us a king, that he may rule us and go before our host to battle, as the other nations have kings over them."

Samuel's heart was sore when he heard them; yet he did not refuse their request, but laid the matter before the Lord. God bade him give them what they asked, but warn them also of all the evils that would come upon the land from the change which they desired. "For," said He, "they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them."

So Samuel spoke to them, long and earnestly, of the burdens that a tyrant king might lay upon them; but their hearts were set on being like their neighbours. "Nay," they cried, "but we will have a king over us." Then the Lord bade Samuel grant them their heart's desire.

Now in the tribe of Benjamin there was a wealthy man named Kish; and he had a son whose name was Saul. Tall and stately he was, and noble in his bearing; head and shoulders he towered above the tallest men of the land. It fell out at this time that his father's asses had wandered away. "Take one of the servants with thee," said Kish to his son, "and go, seek the asses." So Saul and the servant sought hither and thither through the land, by Shalisha and Shalim, and all the country of Benjamin, but the

asses they could not find. At last they came to the land of Zuph, where Samuel dwelt in Ramah; and Saul said to his companion, "Let us go home, for my father will be growing more anxious about us than about the asses." "Nay," said the servant, "in Ramah here there dwells a man of God, whose words are true. Let us seek his counsel; it may be that he will tell us whither to go." "Yet, if we ask him," answered Saul, "what can we offer him? Our bread is spent, and we have no money—what can we bring him?" "I have still a quarter-shekel," said the servant. "Let us give him that, and perhaps he will tell us our way." "Come then," Saul said, "let us go."

So when they came to the gate of Ramah, young maidens were drawing water at the well, and they told the wanderers where to find the wise man. Already God had warned Samuel of the coming of the man who should be king in Israel, and when the aged judge saw the stately young Benjamite drawing near he was aware that this man should reign over the nation. Saul bowed before the venerable old man and said, "Tell me, I pray thee, where the seer's house is." "I am the seer," answered Samuel. "Come thou with me to the sanctuary where I offer sacrifice, and dwell with me today; and tomorrow I shall let thee go home. Fret not for the asses; they are found already. But all the heart of Israel is set on thee and thy father's house." It seemed to Saul that the old man was mocking him. "Nay," he said, "is not my tribe the smallest of the tribes of Israel, and my family the least of all the families of my tribe? Why such talk to me?"

Samuel said nothing, but led the young man to the chief place at the feast table, and set before him the choicest portion, and did him all honour. That night Samuel and Saul talked long together upon the house-top. Early next morning they set out together, and when they had left the town behind, the old man said, "Send thy servant forward, but stand thou still awhile, till I speak God's word to thee." Then he drew out a horn of oil and poured it on Saul's head, and kissed him, and said, "It is because Jehovah hath anointed thee to be captain over His people." And when he saw the young man amazed and in doubt, he said, "I give thee a sign. Today, when thou hast left me, two men shall meet thee

by Rachel's tomb, and shall tell thee that the asses are found, and that thy father is fretting because he deems thee lost; and in the Plain of Tabor three men shall meet thee, as they go to Bethel, bearing, one a skin of wine, another three loaves, and the third three kids, and they shall give thee two of the loaves. Then when thou comest to Gibeah, where the Philistine garrison lies, a company of prophets shall meet thee, with harp and pipe going before them; and when thou hearest them the gift of prophecy shall come upon thee also."

So it fell out even as Samuel had said; and when at last he met the troop of prophets at Gibeah, his spirit took fire within him and all his thoughts seemed changed, and, all involuntarily, he prophesied with the rest, so that all who knew him wondered at the change, and said: "What is this that has happened to the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets?" But Saul kept his own counsel as to what Samuel had told him of his coming kingship.

Now after a time Samuel called all Israel together to Mizpeh, and bade them choose a king by lot. So first the lot by tribes fell upon Benjamin, then the lot by families of a tribe upon the family of Matri, and then the last lot, man by man, upon Saul. But Saul, fearing the great task that was coming upon him, had hidden himself among the baggage of his family's camp. At last they found him and brought him before the great gathering of the nation, and he stood there, head and shoulders higher than any man of Israel, a manifest king of men. "See!" cried Samuel. "See the man whom Jehovah has chosen—none like him in Israel." Then all the people shouted, "God save the King." So Samuel spoke long and wisely to the people of how a king should rule and a people obey; and all that he said he wrote down afterwards in a roll, and laid it for safe-keeping in the Tabernacle. Thereafter Saul went home to Gibeah, and with him went a bodyguard of men whose hearts God had turned to their new King. There were some evil men in Israel, and some fools, who said, "A man like this to save us!" and mocked at him, and brought him no kingly gift. But, like a wise man, Saul paid no heed to their folly.

(2) THE PROMISE OF MORNING

IT was not long before the new King had need to show his mettle. The King of Ammon (Nahash, "Serpent," was his name) besieged Jabesh-Gilead; and when the men of the town sought terms from him, he answered in scorn that he would give them mercy only on condition that he should thrust out the right eye of every man in the city, that all the world might know the helplessness of Israel to defend her own folk. Seven days he gave them, in his vain confidence, to look for help; and when their runners came to Gibeah with the news of their doom there was great weeping. But when he heard of the bluster of the Ammonite, Saul flamed up in fierce anger. Rousing the tribes, he gathered a great army, and at early morning he swept down upon the camp of Ammon, and for half a day the slaughter of the foe was so great that scarce two of them were left together.

When the men of Israel saw how swift and bold was King Saul, they came to their old Judge Samuel. "Where," they said, "are the men who mocked at our king? Bring them here, that we may slay them." But again the King showed that he had a kingly heart. "Nay," he said, "there shall not a man be slain this day: for today Jehovah hath wrought deliverance in Israel." So all men's hearts were turned to Saul, and Samuel spoke wise words to them and bade them fear God and serve Him under their new leader.

Then came war with Israel's ancient enemy, the Philistines. One third of Saul's little army of three thousand men was led by the King's gallant young son Jonathan, and the young prince led them to a raid upon the Philistine garrison at Geba. When the Philistines heard of the slaughter of their garrison, they gathered a mighty army, chariots, horsemen, and foot-soldiers, and swept up from the sea-coast into the hill country. They made their camp in Michmash, and at the sight of that great host the hearts of the men of Israel failed them, so that Saul's war-trumpets blew

in vain. Everywhere men fled to caves and woods and rocks to hide themselves from the enemy; and all the force that Saul could gather to meet his foe was a meagre six hundred. Indeed the fear that was upon the land led Saul into his first mistake; for in dread lest all Israel should desert him, he waited not for the coming of Samuel, but took upon him to offer sacrifice himself, as though he had been a priest of the Lord. And the terror of the Philistines was all the sorer upon Israel because the foe was armed with weapons of iron, while Israel had only bronze. The King and his son Jonathan had iron harness: but the Philistines kept jealous watch that no other men of Israel should learn the secret. So the standing camp of the invading army was in Michmash, and their raiding parties spread terror and destruction through the land.

Saul and his six hundred were camped on the one side of the Gorge of Michmash, and the Philistine host on the other. On either side of the gorge was a sheer face of rock. The precipice on the Philistine side was called the Rock of Bozez, and that on the Israelite side was called Seneh. One day Jonathan stood, with his armour-bearer, looking across to the rock where the Philistine garrison lay, and as he looked, a bold thought came into his heart. "Come," he said to his armour-bearer, "let us climb up to this camp of heathen. Who can tell whether God may not help us to victory. Many or few, it is all alike to Jehovah when He wills to deliver." "My heart is with thine," said his brave companion. "Do what thou wilt." "Well," said Jonathan, "let us show ourselves to the Philistines. If they call to us, 'Stand still, till we come to you,' then we will go no further; but if they call, 'Come up to us,' then we will take it as God's sign that He has given our enemy into our hands."

So when they came out of cover, a Philistine sentry looked over the rock and spied them. "See," he shouted to his comrades, "the Hebrews are coming out of the holes where they hid themselves." The Philistines gathered on the edge of the rock, and jeered at the two Hebrews. "Come up," they shouted, "and we will show you something." "Come, follow me," said Jonathan to his comrade. "God has given us the sign." So the two young

champions climbed the rock on hands and knees, and fell, sword in hand, upon the guard at the top. The prince went forward, slaying, his companion slew behind him, and ere long twenty of the Philistine guard had fallen. In the very moment of that wild rush, there came a great earthquake, and the ground rocked under the feet of the startled enemy. As the terrified fugitives ran for their lives through the lines of tents, they carried panic with them, and men struck down their neighbours to make way for their own flight.

From the other side of the gorge Saul and his men marked the tumult in the Philistine camp. Then the King bade call the roll of his little army, and behold, Jonathan and his armour-bearer were absent, and Saul knew that his son must be in the heart of the uproar. So he and his six hundred threw themselves on the bewildered Philistines. Israelites who had been forced to serve in the enemy's ranks turned their swords against their former masters, the men who had hidden in the caves and woods rushed out to join in the slaughter, and the Philistine host was swept in wild rout down the pass from Michmash to Ajalon.

In the eagerness of pursuit, Saul thought of nothing but vengeance on the oppressor. "No time for food," he cried. "A curse upon the man who eateth any food till evening!" But this was folly, for the hungry pursuers grew faint and weary long ere the night fell. It fell out that the pursuit passed through a wood. Wild bees were there in abundance, and the honey dripped from the combs among the trees upon the ground; but the weary men dared not eat thereof because of the curse. Jonathan, busy with his deadly work among the Philistines, had heard nothing of his father's command, and, as he passed, he thrust the butt of his spear into a comb and ate and was refreshed.

Night fell upon the chase, and Saul sought counsel of the oracle of God as to whether he should make an end of his enemies by a night attack; but the oracle gave no answer. "Someone has broken my oath," said the King. "Cast lots, that we may find the guilty man; whoever he may be, though it were Jonathan my son, he shall die." So the lots were cast, and man by man went free, till the lot fell upon Jonathan. "What hast thou done?" said

his father. "Lo!" said Jonathan, "I did but taste a little honey on the end of my spear; yet I must die." And the grim King answered, "Even so, Jonathan; thou shalt surely die." But the people were wiser than their king. "Shall Jonathan die—" they shouted, "Jonathan, who has won victory for Israel today?" So they rescued the young hero from his father's madness, and the pursuit was stayed.

(3) THE PROMISE FAILS

FTER the rout of Michmash, Saul proved himself a stout and skilful leader. Battle after battle he fought against the hostile tribes around, and on every side he thrust his enemies back, so that his fame grew great, and every brave man in Israel drew to the King's victorious banner.

Now it fell out that Samuel came to Saul and bade him war on Amalek. "The Lord remembers the treachery of Amalek, when Israel came up out of Egypt," he said. "Smite the Amalekites, therefore, and destroy them utterly. Spare nothing, neither man nor beast."

So Saul, with a great army, swept over the whole land of Amalek, from Havilah to the frontier of Egypt, slaying and destroying. Agag, the King of Amalek, he captured alive; but his heart was loth to destroy so much good spoil, and all the best of the cattle and sheep he spared, and drove back before his host to Gilgal. Samuel came to meet him, and the King greeted him with honour; but the old prophet's anger was hot when he saw the plunder. "Why hast thou disobeyed the word of Jehovah?" he said. And when Saul spoke of sacrifice to the Lord, he answered sternly: "To obey is better than to sacrifice. Because thou hast rejected God's command, He also hath rejected thee from being king."

Vainly Saul pled with the old man to pardon the fault and join with him in sacrifice to the Lord. "I will not go with thee," he said; and when the King, in his eagerness, caught hold of the prophet's cloak, he snatched it from his hands so that it rent. "See," cried Samuel, "the Lord hath rent the kingdom of Israel

from thee this day and given it to a better man." Yet when Saul pled with him not to shame him before the host, he yielded, and went with the King to sacrifice. Then Samuel bade him bring the captive King of Amalek before him. Agag came with hope in his heart. "Surely," he said, "the worst is over." But the stern prophet looked grimly upon God's enemy. "As thy sword hath made women childless," he said, "so thy mother shall be childless among women." And with his own hand he hewed the King of Amalek in pieces. Samuel's heart was sore for the failure of the man whom he had anointed as king over Israel; nevertheless he held to his judgment, nor from that day to the day of his death did he ever look again upon the face of Saul.

After a time God spake again to Samuel. "Cease thy mourning for Saul. Take a horn of oil, and go to Jesse the Bethlehemite; for I have found a king for Israel among his sons." So the prophet came to Bethlehem, across the fields where Ruth had gleaned in the days of old; and he bade Ruth's grandson bring his seven sons before him. First came Eliab, tall and stalwart, and Samuel thought, "Surely, this is the Lord's anointed." But God spake in his heart. "Look not on his beauty or his stature; I have refused him, for I look on the heart." So it fell out with Abinadab, and Shammah, and the rest. "None of these hath God chosen," said Samuel. "Have you no other son?" "None but my youngest," answered Jesse, "and he is watching the sheep." "Bring him here," said the prophet, "for we will not eat till he is come."

At last they brought David, the shepherd lad, from the sheepfold—a tall, fair stripling, with blue eyes and golden hair, and a face that won men's hearts. The Lord spoke to Samuel—"Arise, anoint him; for this is he;" and there, with Jesse and his wondering sons standing round, Samuel poured the sacred oil upon the boy's fair head. And in that moment God put a new spirit into David's heart.

But all went ill with poor Saul in Gibeah. God's favour was lost to him; dark clouds of doubt and fear gathered over his soul till he was near distraught; and as his servants watched their moody, careworn master, they whispered to one another that the Lord had sent an evil spirit upon him. Music, they thought,

might charm the King's madness; so they counselled Saul to seek a skilful harper to play before him when the dark hour came. One of them had seen the shepherd lad of Bethlehem and heard his sweet singing and playing, and he commended him to the King.

So David came with his harp and his songs, and the heart of the weary King went out to the bright, winsome lad. When the dark cloud fell upon Saul's spirit, David would take his harp and play and sing, and the sweet strains soothed the fretted mind, and the cloud lifted again from the King's spirit. Thus these twain, the King that was, and the King that was to be, dwelt side by side, and their hearts were knit together in love.

(4) WAGER OF BATTLE

FTER a time, the Philistines plucked up heart to make war upon Israel once more. With a mighty host they came up the hill-slopes from the sea plain, and camped in the Field of Blood, between Shochoh and Azekah. On one ridge lay their army, and on another over against them lay the camp of Israel. A valley ran between the two hosts, and a brook babbled down the hollow.

Now the Philistines had with them a mighty champion. Goliath was his name, one of the ancient race of the giant sons of Anak. Nine feet and more he towered in his crested bronze helmet; from head to foot he was harnessed in gleaming bronze; and in his hand he shook a spear like the beam of a weaver's loom. Day by day he clanked forth in his pride before the ranks of Israel and dared them to single combat. "I defy the armies of Israel," he shouted. "Give me a man, that we may fight together." But at the sight of that giant braggart the hearts of the men of Israel melted within them, and no man dared come forth to fight.

The three eldest sons of Jesse, Eliab, Abinadab, and Shammah, were with King Saul; and their father called his youngest son. "Take this dried corn to thy brothers," he said, "and these

loaves. Give these ten cheeses to the captain of their thousand, and bring me word how they fare." So David took his burden, and came to the camp. He left his charge with the baggage guard and found his three brothers and gave them greeting. At that moment, the champion of Gath came out in all his pride and strutted up and down before the ranks of Israel, shouting his daily challenge. David's heart grew hot as he heard the insults of the heathen Philistine. "Who is this heathen," he asked, "that he dares to defy the armies of the living God?" The soldiers around him told him of the shame of Israel. "Behold," they said, "the man who can kill him, he shall be a rich man: he shall wed the King's daughter, and his father's house shall be quit of all tax in Israel."

Eliab, the eldest son of Jesse, heard the talk, and he turned in anger upon his brother. "What dost thou here?" he cried in scorn. "Who is watching thy few sheep at home? I know you and your pride, a boy coming here to see men fight." Quietly David answered him. "What have I done?" he said. "Was it not but a word?" Someone carried the story to the King, and David was brought before Saul. "Let no man's heart fail because of this man," he said. "I will fight with the Philistine." Saul had forgotten his young minstrel now that the madness had passed from him, and he looked in wonder on the bold lad. "Thou fight with him!" he said. "Thou art but a boy, and he has been a proven soldier all his days."

But David answered, "I kept my father's sheep, and a lion and a bear came upon them and took away a lamb. I caught the lion by his mane and slew him—him, and the bear as well. So shall it be with this heathen Philistine. God who saved me from the lion and the bear will save me from his hand." "Go then," said Saul, wondering, "and the Lord be with thee." Then the King clad the young champion in his own royal harness, and David went forth a little space, helmet on head and sword on thigh. Then he came back to the tent and stripped the cumbrous armour off. "Nay," he said, "I cannot go with these; I have no skill with them." Taking his shepherd's crook and sling, he went down into the valley and, as he passed the brook, he stooped and

chose five smooth stones and put them in the pouch that hung by his side.

With high disdain Goliath watched the slim young figure drawing near. A fair-haired boy to come out as champion against a bronze-clad giant! Scorn and rage well-nigh choked him. "Am I a dog," he bellowed, "that thou comest after me with a stick? Come to me, and I will give thy flesh to the birds of the air and the beasts of the field," and he cursed David by all the gods of Philistia. "Thou comest to me," said David, "with sword and spear and shield; I come in the name of the God of Israel, whom thou hast defied. He will shut thee up in my hand; and I will hew thy head from thee, and give the bodies of the Philistines to bird and beast, so that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel."

So the Philistine clanked forward to meet David, and David ran lightly to meet the Philistine. As he came he slipped a stone into his sling, whirled the sling about his head, and smote Goliath on the forehead. Down upon his face clattered the stricken giant. David sprang upon him, drew the huge sword of the fallen braggart from its sheath, and hewed off his head.

The army of the Philistines stood aghast as they saw the fall of their champion. Then panic-terror fell upon them, and they fled. Behind them thundered the men of Israel in hot pursuit, shouting bravely enough now. Down the long valley by Shaaraim roared the chase, and across the plain to the very gates of Gath and Ekron; and all the way the Philistine dead lay thick.

After the killing was over and done, David came back, Goliath's grim head dangling from his hand, and Abner, the captain of the host, led him before the King. Saul did him high honour, and kept him as captain of his own body-guard. Jonathan stood by his father's side, and watched while the two spake with one another; and his gallant heart went out towards the gallant lad who had fought so well for Israel. He had no thought of jealousy towards this new-comer whose fame bade fair to outshine his own. Valour drew to valour, and Jonathan loved David as his own soul. In the lavish, generous way of these old days, he heaped gifts upon him, threw his princely cloak about the young hero's shoulders, girt

DAVID AND GOLIATH.
(I Samuel, xvii, 41.)

his belt about his waist, and gave him the sword and bow that had drunk so much Philistine blood at Michmash. From that day, these two great souls were as one—more than brothers.

But ere long jealousy sprang up in the troubled heart of Saul. For when the campaign was over and the victors came back in triumph, the women of Israel came forth with music and dancing, to welcome the men who had fought for them; and as they came they sang in answering choruses:

"*Saul hath slain his thousands;*
David his tens of thousands."

Bitter was Saul's anger as he listened. "Tens of thousands to David," he muttered, "thousands only to me! What will he have next but the kingdom?" And Saul eyed David from that day forward—death in his heart.

On the morrow his anger burst all bounds. Madness came upon him, so that he raved before all men; and David, mindful of how his music had soothed the King in earlier days, brought his harp and played and sang. But his presence only added fuel to the fire. Saul sat moodily playing with his javelin and watching his young rival; and an evil thought mastered his mind. "I will smite him to the wall," he said. Twice he flung the javelin at the unarmed harper; and twice David stooped and felt the flying death whistle over him. And all the more because he had shamed himself and failed, Saul hated and dreaded David; for he knew that the God who had forsaken him stood by the younger man. Yet for a while the quarrel was patched up. Michal, Saul's younger daughter, was wedded to the young captain, and David bore himself ever bravely in the wars, so that all men praised him. But the more they praised, the more the King dreaded and hated him, and watched his chance to make an end of him.

(5) "PASSING THE LOVE OF WOMEN"

JONATHAN'S brave heart held no such jealousy of David, though he knew that the young Bethlehemite stood between him and the throne. He spoke up bravely for his friend to his angry father. "Sin not, my father, against thy servant David. Naught has he done thee but good. He risked his life and slew the Philistine, and saved Israel. Thou sawest it, and wast glad. And now thou wilt slay him without a cause, shedding innocent blood!" Saul was conscience-stricken for the moment. "As God lives," he said, "he shall not be slain." But soon the cloud of hatred darkened his soul again. His oath went to the winds, and once and again he strove to have David's life.

At last the danger grew unbearable. David sought his friend. "What have I done," he said, "and wherein have I sinned against thy father, that he seeketh my life?" "God forbid," said Jonathan. "My father hides nothing from me. If it were as thou sayest, he would tell me; but it is not so." "Prove the thing and see for thyself," said David. "For two days I shall be absent from my wonted place at the King's table. If thy father miss me, then say thou, 'David craved leave to go to Bethlehem for the yearly sacrifice in his home.' If he say, 'It is well,' then I need fear nothing; but if he is angry, then be sure that he is set on mischief towards me." So it was agreed between them on this wise. David was to hide himself for two days, and on the third day was to come to a cairn on the moor, and wait there. Meanwhile Jonathan was to test his father, as David had suggested. On the third day he would come forth with his bow and arrows and shoot three arrows by the cairn. If he said to his attendant, "The arrows are on this side of thee," David would know that all was well, and that he might return with safety; but if he said, "The arrows are beyond thee," then there was nothing for it but flight.

So David betook himself to hiding, and Jonathan went back to his place in his father's house. One day passed, and Saul noted

David's empty place at the table; but he said nothing. The second day he turned to Jonathan. "Why has the son of Jesse been absent from the table both yesterday and today?" Jonathan told him of the yearly sacrifice at Bethlehem; but Saul blazed up in wild rage. "Thou perverse rebel," he shouted, "do I not know that to thine own loss and thy mother's shame thou art covenanted to this son of Jesse? While he lives there is no endurance for thee, nor for thy kingdom. Bring him to me; for he shall surely die." "Why should you slay him?" cried Jonathan. "What hath he done?" Saul answered his son by hurling his javelin at him; and Jonathan, fierce and bold as his father, sprang from the table in hot anger at the insult, and the danger to his friend that lay behind it.

Next day he went out on the moor with a boy carrying his bow and quiver. When he came near the cairn he strung his bow, and laid an arrow on the string. "Run," he said to the boy, " and fetch the arrows that I shoot," and as the boy ran he shot three arrows over his head. "Are not the arrows beyond thee?" he called. "Make speed, hasten." So the lad gathered the arrows, and brought them back to his master, and Jonathan gave him the bow and quiver, and sent him home. And when there was no one to see, David came out of his lurking-place. No words were needed; the two friends knew that they must part. Silently they kissed one another, and wept bitterly over this end of their friendship. At last Jonathan spoke. "Go in peace," he said. "We have sworn, the twain of us, that the Lord shall be between us, and between our children, for ever." So they parted the one from the other, David to hide himself from the anger of Saul, Jonathan to stand to the death by a father whom he could neither trust nor honour. Once only did these two faithful friends meet again.

(6) A CAPTAIN OF OUTLAWS

DAVID was left lonely, outlawed and unarmed. He fled southwards to Nob, where the Tent of the Congregation stood, and begged Abimelech the priest to give him bread. There was naught in the Tabernacle save the sacred bread that was laid before the Lord but the priest gave him that. "My father," said David to the old man, "hast thou never a sword to give me? For I came in haste and waited not to gird my weapons about me." "Here is the sword of Goliath the Philistine," said the priest; "no other weapon have I." David grasped it eagerly. "There is none like it," he said; "give it me;" and went his way girt with the mighty blade of his old enemy. But from that meeting and from his kindness to David, evil came upon the priest and all his house; for a base Edomite slave of Saul's household was in the Tabernacle, and saw and heard what was done. He told the tale to Saul, and the King, in mad wrath, slew Abimelech, and all the priests of the Tabernacle, eighty and five, and left none alive in Nob. Only one priest, Abiathar, escaped the slaughter, and fled to David with the dreadful tale of murder and sacrilege.

And now there began for David a life of unending danger and adventure. First of all he fled to the stronghold of his old enemies, and cast himself upon the mercy of Achish, the Philistine King of Gath. But when the men of Gath saw him, with the sword of their great champion on his thigh, they were eager to avenge the death of Goliath. When David saw their hatred of him he feared that he had thrust his head into the lion's mouth. Therefore he feigned madness, and behaved himself before the King like a man bereft of his wits. Achish spake a rough jest as he saw the Israelite soldier mowing and gibbering before him. "Have I not fools enough in my house already, that ye have brought this madman to me?" So he drove him out, and David went, glad to get well away.

He betook himself to the cave of Adullam, in a lonely hill not

DAVID PLAYING BEFORE SAUL.
(I Samuel, xix, 9–10.)

far from the Vale of Elah, where he slew Goliath, and but twelve miles from his old home at Bethlehem. There his kinsfolk gathered round him, and he was joined by all the broken men of the land, debtors and outlaws, and men whose hearts were bitter over their wrongs, till at last he had a company of four hundred fierce fighters, who feared naught. From his stronghold he raided the lands of the enemies of Israel on every hand, and many were the stories that were told of his valour, and that of the wild men who followed him.

One noble story of those days has come down to us. It fell out that the Philistines were holding Bethlehem with a garrison, and David sought in vain to drive them from his old home. At evening there came over his spirit a great longing for the happy days of his boyhood. "Oh," he sighed, "that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate." Three of his mighty men, captains of the chosen thirty whom he kept ever by his side, heard what he said. Silently they stole away, under the shade of evening, dashed through the line of the Philistine sentries, and came back again at dawn bearing with them, it may be in the battered helmet of one of them, some of the precious water. But their leader's heart was moved to its very depths by their unselfish heroism. "Drink it?" he said. "God forbid that I should do such a thing. This is not water, it is the blood of the men who risked their lives for me." And he poured it out on the earth as an offering to God. Can you wonder that his men loved such a leader, who set such price on their devotion?

There came a message one autumn day to his stronghold. "Lo, the Philistines are gathered against Keilah and are plundering the threshing-floors." David gathered his troop about him, six hundred of them now, and they swooped down upon the Philistine raiders and scattered them with a great slaughter. Saul heard of the gallant rescue, but it woke no gratitude in his heart towards the man who was doing the work that the king should have done. "David is shut in with gates and bars," he thought. "God has given him into my hand." David himself had no great trust in the gratitude of the men of Keilah towards their deliverer; and when God warned him that they would prove

traitors and give him up to Saul, he and his six hundred fled from the ungrateful town before the King could get his troops afoot.

While the outlaws were lurking from Saul's ceaseless hatred in the wilderness of Ziph, Jonathan compassed a last meeting with his friend. "Fear not," said the gallant young prince. "Saul's hand shall not harm thee. The day will come when thou shalt be king over Israel; and I shall be next to thee. And that also my father knows." But Jonathan only read half the future, for God willed otherwise for him. So these two noble spirits cheered one another, and pledged their faith each to the other once more, and parted, to meet no more on earth.

Now it befell that David betook himself to the Wilderness of Desolation that lies towards the Dead Sea, and lurked in dens and caves near where the Fountain of the Wild Goat makes a ribbon of green grass and bushes through the midst of the desert of tumbled cliffs and burning stones; and Saul came in pursuit of him with three thousand picked men. And so it happened that in the chase the King came into the very cave where David and his men lay concealed, and in the darkness David stood by Saul's very hand, and could have smitten him; but he held his hand, and only cut off a piece of the King's cloak. Then when the King was gone out of the cave, David followed him, shewed him the severed piece of his robe, and told him how near he had been to death. Saul was greatly moved, as he heard how he had been spared by the man whom he had treated so ill. "Thou art more righteous than I, my son David," he said, with tears. "God reward thee for what thou hast done this day. Yea, I know that thou shalt surely be king hereafter; and then deal thou mercifully with my family as thou hast dealt with me." So there was peace for a time between these twain; but ere long Saul's dark hour came back upon him once more, and his old jealousy of David flamed up afresh in his poor, tortured brain.

Meanwhile Samuel died in a good old age. All Israel was gathered together to his burial at Ramah, and great was the mourning when the wise judge of Israel was laid to rest. Saul had forgotten David's generosity, and when the treacherous men of Ziph sent word to the King that his rival was hiding at Hachilah

in the Wilderness of Desolation, he gathered three thousand men, under Abner, the captain of his host, and went in pursuit. David's spies warned him of Saul's coming, and by night the hunted outlaw and his men stole silently to the place where their enemy had pitched his camp. There below them, in the midst of the laager, lay the King of Israel and Abner, with their chosen men about them. Then said David to the two men who stood by his side, "Who will go down with me to Saul to the camp?" And one of them, Abishai, a fierce and ruthless soldier, kin to David, answered, "I will go." So they twain crept down through Saul's encampment, till they stood over the sleeping King as he lay on the ground. His spear was thrust into the ground by his head, and around him slumbered all his warriors.

Abishai was eager to grasp the chance. "It is God," he whispered to David, "who has put thine enemy in thy power. Let me pin him to the earth with his own spear; no need for a second blow." But David could not do it. "Nay," he said to the fierce soldier at his side, "I cannot take the guilt of striking the Lord's anointed. God must deal with him. Some day, in sickness or in battle, he will die. God forbid that my hand should harm him. Yet take thou his spear and this water-jar from his side, and let us begone."

So the two wanderers passed in the darkness through the sleeping camp again, and climbed a hill that lay over against Saul's resting-place. Then David shouted to Abner by name; and Abner answered, "Who art thou that criest to the King?" Thereat David mocked the captain of the host. "A mighty man indeed thou art! None like thee in Israel! A pretty guard thou hast kept upon thy lord—for a man came into the camp to slay the King. Ill hast thou done. Ay, by God's life, thou hast deserved to die, because thou hast not guarded the Lord's anointed. See where the King's spear is, and the water-jar that stood by his pillow!"

Saul was roused by the shouting, and knew the familiar voice. "Is this thy voice," he cried, "my son David?" "My voice, my lord, O King," answered David. "Why wilt thou thus pursue me? What ill have I done thee? If it be God that hath set strife between us, let sacrifice be done unto Him; but if men have made

the strife, cursed be they, for they have made me a wanderer from my heritage in Israel. Should the great King of Israel come forth to chase one partridge on the mountains?" Again Saul's heart was touched. "I have sinned," he cried. "Come back to me, my son David; no more will I seek to harm thee, since my life has been dear in thy sight today. Lo, I have played the fool, and my sin is heavy." "See," said David, "here is the King's spear! Let one of thy young men come and fetch it. God reward every man according to his desert. Thy life was in my hand this day; but I would not harm the Lord's anointed. As thy life was precious to me, so let my life be precious to God, and let Him bring me out of all my troubles." "Blessed be thou, my son David," said Saul. "Great things shalt thou do, and ever shall victory be with thee." So David went on his way, and Saul turned homewards.

(7) "HOW ARE THE MIGHTY FALLEN!"

PITE of Saul's promises, David did not trust him. So he and his six hundred betook themselves once more to the home of their ancient enemy at Gath, where King Achish reigned. This time Achish received him kindly, and gave him the town of Ziklag for his dwelling-place, and for sixteen months David was the vassal of a heathen Philistine. From Ziklag he raided the land of Amalek and all the desert tribes of the south, telling Achish falsely that he had been warring against Judah, till the Philistine King believed that the Hebrew outlaw was his man for ever.

Then when sixteen months had passed there came war once more between Philistia and Israel. Achish gathered his mighty men for the field, and would fain have made David chief of his body-guard; but the Philistine lords were jealous and distrustful of the Hebrew adventurer, so that Achish had to dismiss him from the host; and David was saved from the sin and shame of fighting against his own kindred in a heathen's quarrel. The great host of the Philistines rolled up the coast-road, and through

the passes of Carmel into the fair valley of Esdraelon, and there they camped in the north, by the village of Shunem.

King Saul gathered the might of Israel to meet them, and camped on Mount Gilboa looking across from the southern side of Esdraelon to the Philistine camp on the north. But his heart was sore troubled and distressed. Samuel, in whom he used to trust, was dead and gone. The priests of the Lord he had slain for their kindness to David; and when he sought counsel of the oracles of God, there was no answer to one so stained with sacred blood. "Find me a witch woman," he cried to his servants, "that I may seek her rede;" and they answered him, "There is a witch woman at Endor." So Saul disguised himself, and took two of his guard with him, and they three set out on their dreary journey northwards, right across the face of the Philistine army, and came to Endor, to the witch woman's cave, by night.

"Read me the omens," he said to her, "and bring me up from the dead the man I shall name to thee." But the witch hesitated. "Know you not," she said, "that Saul has slain the wizards out of the land? Why seek ye to entrap me?"

"By God's life," Saul sware, "no harm shall come to thee for this."

"Whom shall I call up, then?" she said. And Saul answered her, "Bring me up Samuel!" She wove her charms, and lo! the figure of the old judge and prophet rose before her astonished eyes, and she shrieked in terror. "Why hast thou deceived me?" she cried. "Thou art Saul." "Fear nothing," answered the King. "What seest thou?" "I see a god coming up out of the earth." "What is his form?" "An old man cometh up," she faltered; "and he is covered with a mantle." Then Saul knew that it was his old teacher, and he bowed low before him.

Then said Samuel, "Why hast thou disturbed me, rousing me up?" "I am sore distressed," Saul replied. "The Philistines make war upon me; God has forsaken me, and answers me no more, either by prophet or by vision: therefore, have I called thee, to seek thy counsel." "Why ask of me," was the grim answer, "since God hath forsaken thee, and given all to another, even to David? Moreover, He will give the host of Israel into the hands of

the Philistines; and tomorrow thou and thy sons shall be with me."

At that dark answer, the King fell to the ground; and there, between despair and faintness (for he had eaten nothing for a day and a night), he lay helpless. The witch woman in pity set meat before him, and his companions urged him to eat; and so at last they crept back in the darkness to their camp on Mount Gilboa.

All the next day the battle was hot on the slopes of the hill, and the day went ill for the men of Israel. Jonathan was slain, and with him his two brethren, Abinadab and Melchi-shua. At evening Saul stood on the hillside, weary and despairing, and sore wounded by the Philistine bowmen; and the pursuit was drawing near. "Draw thy sword," he said to his armour-bearer, "and thrust me through, lest these heathen slay me and make a mock of me." But the armour-bearer dared not slay the King. So Saul took his sword, set its hilt against the ground, and fell upon it. And when the armour-bearer saw it, he too fell upon his sword, and so ended. And all Israel fled from the country round about, and the Philistines took possession of the land and of the cities.

On the morrow the Philistines went forth to strip the slain. Great was their triumph when they found that Saul and his three sons had fallen. They smote off the King's head, and sent it with his armour to hang in the temple of Astarte in their own city of Askelon; and his body, and the bodies of his sons, they hanged on the walls of Beth-shan, that all the men of northern Israel might see and be afraid. But there were brave men in Jabesh-Gilead, beyond Jordan, who remembered how Saul had saved them and theirs from the Serpent of Ammon. All through the night they marched to Beth-shan, took down the poor, broken body of their deliverer and the bodies of his sons from the walls, and burned them with honour at Jabesh. The bones they buried under a tree in Jabesh-Gilead, and for seven days they mourned and fasted.

On the third day after the rout of Gilboa, there came a messenger from the battle to David's camp at Ziklag. It seemed that he bore evil tidings, for his clothes were rent, and dust was sprin-

kled on his head and in his hand he bore a blood-stained bracelet and crown. He came before David and bowed low to the earth. Then said David, "Whence comest thou?" "I am escaped from the camp of Israel," said the fugitive. "Israel has fled from the battle; great has been the slaughter, and Saul and Jonathan his son are dead also." "How knowest thou," said David, "that Saul and Jonathan are dead?" And in answer he told a false tale (thinking therewith to gain favour from one whose enemy Saul had been) of how he had seen the King wounded and had slain him at his own command, and had brought his bracelet and his crown in token of the deed. At that sore news David and his men rent their clothes, and wept for the loss and shame that had fallen upon Israel; and their mourning lasted till the night was falling. Then said David to the messenger, "Who art thou that hast brought such tidings?" "I am the son of a stranger, an Amalekite," he said. "And thou didst not fear to put out thine hand to slay God's anointed?" cried David. "Go to him and smite him," he said to one of his young men. And the young man struck the liar dead.

Then David made a Lament for Saul and Jonathan. "The Song of the Bow," he called it, and in after days it was written down in a book, and all Israel knows it.

"Cut down on the hills is the beauty of Israel;
The mighty are fallen!
From Gath keep it silent, nor in streets of Askelon
Publish the tidings;
Lest to the heathen, the Philistines' daughters,
Be pride and rejoicing.
Never, henceforth, on the hills of Gilboa
Be dew, rain, or harvest:
For there fell dishonoured the shield of the mighty
Anointed for battle!
Ah, for the days when the blood of the fallen
Dyed Jonathan's bowstring!
When from the death-feast Saul's falchion unwearied
Came not back empty!

Lovely and pleasant were they in their lifetime,
In death not divided;
Swifter than eagles and stronger than lions,
Yet they have fallen!
Daughters of Israel, weep for Saul's downfall!
Well may ye mourn him:
He who has decked you with gold, and with scarlet
Clad you triumphant!
Lo! in the midst of the thunder of battle
The mighty are fallen!
Lo! on the mountains our foeman hath triumphed,
Jonathan perished!
Sore is my sorrow this day for thee, Jonathan,
Brother beloved!
Wondrous thy love to me, passing in sweetness
All loving of women!
Fall'n are the mighty, in overthrow perished
The weapons of warfare!

(8) "ARISE, O LORD, INTO THY REST."

NOW when Saul had fallen in Mount Gilboa, David returned from Ziklag to his native land, and dwelt in Hebron; and there the men of his own tribe, Judah, crowned him king. But Abner, the captain of Saul's host, remained faithful to his dead master. He took Esh-baal, Saul's son, and made him king over Israel. And so for seven years and six months there were two kings in the land, and a constant bickering of civil strife between Judah and Israel. And in one of the battles it befell that Abner had the ill-fortune to slay most unwillingly, Asahel, who was brother to David's fierce captain, Joab, and to Abishai, the ruthless soldier who would have smitten Saul to the ground at Hachilah. So there was blood-feud between Abner and Joab and Abishai. After a time Abner wearied of fighting against his brethren of Judah and was offended by Esh-baal; so he came to David at

SAUL AND THE WITCH OF ENDOR.
(1 Samuel, xxviii, 14.)

Hebron and sought to make terms with him. But Joab murdered him treacherously in the gate of Hebron, to avenge the blood of Asahel.

Then two evil men who were captains in the host of Esh-baal slew their master as he slept, and brought his head to David at Hebron, thinking to gain favour and rich reward, for that they had rid him of a rival. But David was wroth. "By God's life," he said, "I slew the man who came to me in Ziklag with the news of Saul's death thinking I would reward him. And you who have slain a righteous man sleeping in his own bed in his own house—much more surely shall I require his blood of you, and rid the earth of you!" So he bade his guards slay them, and they cut off the murdering hands and the feet that had been swift to evil and hung them by the well-side in Hebron, that all might see and fear.

Now that Esh-baal was dead, there was none to dispute the throne with David, and all men were glad that the strife should cease. The men of all the tribes came to David in Hebron. "Behold," they said, "we are thy bone and thy flesh. In days past, when Saul was king, thou wast our leader; and Jehovah said to thee, 'Thou shalt feed my people, and be a captain over Israel.'" So David was made king over all the land, being then a man of thirty years. But the strong fortress of Jerusalem, in the very heart of the land, was still in the hands of the Jebusites, who were of the ancient race of Canaan; and David was fain to win it for his own. So strong was the city that the Jebusites laughed at his assault. They manned their battlements with their cripples and their blind folk, and mocked at David's host below. "Except you can beat our cripples and our blind folk, no entrance for you here," they shouted. But Joab climbed up into the stronghold by the water-course, and the city fell into David's hands. There he dwelt, and made it the capital of the land, and called it after his own name, "the City of David."

So the new king waxed strong, and when the ancient enemies of Israel, the Philistines, came up against him, he smote them once and again with great slaughter in the Valley of Rephaim, so that their strength was broken. Moreover, his fame spread far and wide, so that Hiram, the wise King of Tyre, the merchant city,

sent an embassy to David, and gave him cedar wood, and carpenters, and stone-hewers, to build him a royal palace; for in such things the men of Tyre were more cunning than the men of Israel.

And when all had thus gone well with him, David bethought him that for twenty years the Ark of the Lord had been left at the Town of the Woods in the house of Abinadab on the hill; and he was minded to bring it up to his new city. Therefore he went down with a great multitude to the place of the Ark, and brought it up on a cart with mighty rejoicing, and with all manner of music going before it. But so it fell out that the oxen stumbled, and Uzzah, the son of Abinadab, put forth his hand to steady the Ark; and immediately he fell dead beside the Ark of Jehovah. So David held his death for an ill omen. "How shall I dare to bring the Ark of the Lord to me?" he said; and he left it in the house of one of his servants, a man of Gath named Obed-edom; and there it abode for three months.

Then David heard that good fortune had come with the Ark to the man of Gath; and he feared no longer to bring the Ark into Jerusalem. So from the house of Obed-edom they bare it, as of old, on the shoulders of men, with the silver trumpets blowing before it, and choirs of singers accompanying it, through the gates of the city and up to its resting-place on Mount Zion; and as they went, the King, robed in white linen, danced before the Ark for very joy of heart. David had spread a tent for it, and when the Ark of God's strength had arisen into its rest, and was set in its place, he made great sacrifices, burnt-offerings and peace-offerings, and blessed all the people in the name of the Lord. All had their share in the joy of that great day, and to gladden their hearts the King gave to each man and woman bread and meat and a flagon of wine. So came the Ark of God into the city of God, whereof the Lord said, "This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it."

(9) A GOOD MAN'S SIN

NOW when David had brought up the Ark of Jehovah to Zion, and when he had rest from all his enemies, it came into his heart to do yet more for the glory of God. So he sent for Nathan the prophet, and to him he said, "Is it well that I should dwell in a palace of cedar, and the Ark of God in a tent?" David's thought seemed good to Nathan; but that night God spake to the prophet, and told him that David should not build the temple which he wished to build, because he had been a man of war and had shed much blood. After him his son should reign, who should be a man of peace, and by him should the temple be built. So David was fain to stay his hand; but he gathered much treasure to aid the son that was to be in the building of an House to God.

Great glory came to David in these bright, early years of his reign. He subdued the Philistines, Moab, and Edom, and routed the forces of the King of Zobah, and the Syrians of Damascus who came to help the men of Zobah; and he won great spoil from all his foes. Insomuch that even the King of Great Hamath, far to the north, heard of the might of the King of Israel, and sent an ambassage and tribute to David when he had smitten the King of Zobah. So David's fame grew great. And in those days he remembered Jonathan and his friendship, and sought out Jonathan's son Merib-baal, the last of his house. He gave him all the estates of his grandfather Saul, and appointed him a place at the palace table, as though he had been a prince of the blood-royal.

Thus all went well with the King; but now there came into his life that which was to make trouble and sorrow for him all the rest of his days. There was war with the men of Ammon, and Joab and the host of Israel were besieging Rabbah, the capital city of the Ammonites. But whether it was that David was war-weary, or that he grew slothful and luxurious, he went not forth with his army, but remained in Jerusalem. It fell out that one evening, as he walked on the flat roof of his palace in the cool

evening air, he beheld a woman, exceeding beautiful to look upon; and he would fain have made her his wife, but she was wedded already to a brave soldier of the body-guard, Uriah, one of the ancient race of the Hittites. So David sent for Uriah from the host, and did him honour and spoke smooth things to him. But there was guile in the King's heart, and evil passion; for when he sent Uriah back to the army, he sent with him a letter to Joab, the chief captain, bidding him place Uriah in the front of the battle, where the strife was hottest, and then leave him to perish.

His evil will was done, and ere long there came a message from Joab, telling the King that some of the men of Israel had fallen in fight; "thy servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also." Then David sent back a message of vile hypocrisy, bidding Joab take heart, since all the loss that had befallen was but the fortune of war. Bathsheba, the wife of the dead Uriah, made her pretence of mourning; and when the farce was over, David sent for her, and she became his wife. "But the thing that David had done was evil in the eyes of the Lord."

Therefore God sent to him Nathan the prophet, and he spake to the guilty King on this wise: "There were two men in one city, the one rich, the other poor. The rich man had flocks and herds in abundance; the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb. He had bought it and reared it, it dwelt with him and his children in his house, ate of his food, drank of his cup, lay in his bosom, and was loved of him like a daughter. There came a traveller to the rich man's house, and instead of taking from his own flocks to feed his guest, the rich man seized and slew the poor man's lamb, and set it before the wayfarer."

David's anger was hot when he heard that pitiful tale. "By God's life," he cried, "death to the man who did such a thing. Yea, and he shall give back the lamb fourfold, because he did this, and had no pity." And Nathan said to David: "Thou art the man! Hearken to God's word. Because thou hast despised God's command, and hast slain Uriah and taken his wife to be thy wife, therefore the sword shall never depart from thy house, and the evil that shall follow thee shall spring from thine own."

David was conscience-stricken. "I have sinned against the

NEWS OF BATTLE.
(II Samuel, xviii, 31–33.)

Lord," he said; and Nathan answered: "Thy sin is forgiven. Thou shalt not die. But because, by this crime, thou hast given evil men cause to mock God, therefore the child that is born to thee shall die."

So it fell out; for ere long Bathsheba's child sickened. David knew that it was the hand of God upon him; and he fasted and lay on the ground, nor could any of his courtiers persuade him to eat. For seven days the boy lay sick, and David prayed for mercy; and on the seventh day the little life that suffered for another's sin went back to God. His servants were afraid to tell the King that the boy was dead; but David marked them whispering to one another, and needed no telling. "Is the child dead?" he said. "The child is dead," they answered.

Then the King rose from the ground, bathed and anointed himself, and changed his garments. He went to the House of God and worshipped; then he came back to his palace, called for food, and ate thereof. Men looked on in amaze, wondering if his sorrow had turned his brain. But David said: "While the child lived, I fasted and wept; for I bethought me that God might perchance spare my boy. Now he is dead, why should I fast? Will fasting bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me."

So David comforted Bathsheba in her sorrow. And after a time another son was born to them, and they called him Solomon; and God loved Solomon. But all these things were but the beginning of sorrows to the house of David.

(10) THE WAGES OF SIN

ERE long the judgment that had been foretold began to reveal itself in David's household. Amnon, one of his sons, did grievous wrong to his half-sister Tamar, and her brother Absalom waited his time, and slew Amnon for his evil deed. Absalom went into exile after the slaying of his half-brother, but David's heart yearned for his brilliant, impetuous son, and when three years were past he allowed him to return to Jerusalem.

In all Israel there was no man to be compared with the young prince for beauty. From head to heel he was faultless; but his glory was the luxuriant locks of hair that grew thick and long and hung down upon his shoulders. For long after he came back to Jerusalem, the King would have naught to do with him, and though at last he was reconciled, yet in the days of estrangement Absalom's heart had turned away from his father, and he began to plot against him. Very cunningly he laid his plans; for first he got chariots and horses, and a guard of fifty runners to run before him when he drove abroad, so that men grew used to seeing him as splendid as the King. Then he set himself to win the hearts of the people. He would rise early in the morning and sit in the city gate. A man would come from the country with a law-plea for judgment, and Absalom would talk with him and tell him that his cause was just, but that unfortunately the King was too busy to attend to such matters. "Oh, that I were judge in the land," he would say, "no man should lack justice then!" And when any man offered to make salaam before the King's son, this splendid young prince would raise him up with his own hand, and kiss him. So little by little Absalom's favour with the people grew, and David's waned, till at last the prince had stolen the hearts of no small part of the nation from his father.

Then when he judged the time was ripe he craved leave of David to go to Hebron to fulfil a vow, and at Hebron he threw off the mask and caused himself to be proclaimed king with sound of trumpet; and many of the men of Israel joined themselves to him. Among them came Ahithophel, David's counsellor, who was reckoned the wisest man in Israel, so that men said that his counsel was like that of the oracle of God. His rebellion was another fruit of David's great sin, for he was near of kin to Bathsheba whom David had stolen from her husband Uriah, and he sought vengeance on the King for the shame that he had brought upon his house.

There came swift word to David. "The hearts of the men of Israel are after Absalom." Then said the King, "Let us arise and flee, lest Absalom come upon us and smite the Holy City with the sword." So he went forth from Jerusalem with all his household,

and with him went his body-guard of Cretan bowmen and Philistine spearmen, and in especial six hundred men of Gath, under their captain Ittai. As they passed the brook Kedron that comes down the valley by Jerusalem, David said to the captain of the men of Gath, "Why goest thou with us? Turn back and abide with the new king. Thou art a stranger and an exile. It was but the other day that thou camest among us. I must go where I may; but why should'st thou wander with me? Go back, thou and thy brethren, and mercy and goodness go with thee." But if David had a generous heart, so had this heathen soldier. "By God's life, and thy life, my King," he said, "wherever my lord the King shall be, whether in death or in life, there also shall I, thy servant, be." With a full heart, David bade him pass on, and the man of Gath and his six hundred marched on with the King.

As David and his men passed out of the city amidst the wailing and lamenting of the people, there came forth with him, Zadok and Abiathar, the priests, with the Levites bearing the Ark of Jehovah; but the King forbade them to go with him. "Carry back the Ark of God into the city," he said. "If God's blessing is upon me, He will bring me back again, and show me both it and His House; but if He has no longer any pleasure in me, lo, I am in His hands; let Him do unto me as He deems best. Ye and your sons return to Jerusalem, and I shall bide in the wilderness until ye send me word of what goes forward in the city." So the priests and the Levites carried back the Ark, and David and his companions went on, barefoot, with veiled faces and weeping.

Word came to the King that Ahithophel had joined with the conspirators. "O Lord," he said, "turn thou the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness." On the heights of Olivet there came to meet David one loyal friend, Hushai the Archite, his robe rent for sorrow, and his head sprinkled with dust. "Nay," said David, "if thou comest with me, thou canst be nothing but a burden. Return to Jerusalem and make thy peace with Absalom. So, it may be, thou shalt make void the counsel of Ahithophel."

A little farther on, the King was met by a false traitor. For Ziba, steward to Merib-baal, Jonathan's son, came forth to meet the King with presents for him and his company. "But

where is thy master?" said David. "Behold," said Ziba, "he abideth in Jerusalem; for he hopes that today may see him set up as king in his father's stead." David believed the liar, and gave him all that Merib-baal possessed.

As they passed by Bahurim, Shimei, a man of the house of Saul, came forth to jeer and curse at them. "Come out," he shouted, "come out, thou man of blood, thou man of evil. Is not God repaying thee for all the blood of the house of Saul? Behold, thou art taken in thine own evil, because thou art a man of blood." David had fierce men with him. "Why—" cried the grim Abishai, "why should this dead dog curse my lord the King? Let me go over to him and take off his head." "Nay," answered David, "mine own son Absalom seeketh my life; how much more may this Benjamite seek it? Let him alone, and let him curse. It may be God will send blessings for his cursing." So they passed on their way, and the foul-tongued rogue followed them, cursing, and throwing stones and dust upon them.

Meanwhile Absalom and all his company came into Jerusalem, and Hushai made his peace with the usurper, and was bidden to his council, as David had foreseen. Ahithophel was for instant pursuit of the fleeing King. "Give me twelve thousand men," he said, "and I will catch him weary and weak, and will slay him alone, and then all the people shall turn to thee in his stead." His rede seemed good to the prince; but he was fain to hear the counsel of Hushai as well. "Nay," said the Archite, "Ahithophel's counsel is not good. Thou knowest thy father and his men, mighty men ever, and now bitter of soul, like a bear robbed of her whelps. If we fight with them, there will be slaughter, and men's hearts may fail them. Wait until all Israel is gathered to thee. Then lead them forth thyself, and even if David be in a fenced city, why, we shall be strong enough to haul it with ropes into the river till there is not a stone of it left."

Hushai's bluster pleased the prince better than the shrewdness of Ahithophel, and Absalom gave orders as he had advised. David and his men escaped by night over Jordan; and when Ahithophel saw the folly that had already doomed the conspiracy, he rode back to his own house, ordered all his affairs, and then hanged himself.

David came to Mahanaim, where Jacob had met with the angels of the Lord, and there Barzillai, the man of Gilead, and other loyal friends brought store of food and comforts for him and his weary men. Then the King set his men in array for the battle that must needs come. To Joab, he gave a third part of the host in charge, to Abishai, another third, and to Ittai, the faithful man of Gath, the rest; and he himself was ready to fare forth at the head of all. But the army would have none of it. "Thy life," they said, "means everything. Ten thousand of us would not equal it. Therefore do thou abide in Mahanaim, and if need be, bring us help." So King David stood by the city gate and watched the host file out. And when they were all ready for the march he summoned Joab, and Abishai, and Ittai, and before all the host he gave them one last charge. "For my sake," he said, "deal gently with Absalom."

The two hosts met in the wood of Ephraim, and before David's veterans, the multitude of Absalom's army was as corn to the sickle. Twenty thousand perished that day, more in the wild haste of flight among the ravines and rocks of the forest than by the sword.

Absalom rode for his life upon a swift mule; but as he passed beneath a great oak his long hair caught in the branches. The mule went from under him, and he was left hanging. A soldier of David's army recognised him, and brought word of his plight to Joab. "Thou sawest him," said the grim captain. "Why did'st thou not slay him there? I would have given thee ten shekels of silver and a belt." "Weigh into mine hand a thousand shekels of silver, and yet I would not lay a finger on the King's son," said the soldier. "We heard the King warn thee and Abishai and Ittai against harming Absalom. If I had slain him, thou thyself would'st have been against me." "I have no time to waste on thee," said Joab roughly. He snatched up three javelins in his hand, hastened to where Absalom hung in the branches of the oak, and drove them through his heart.

The war horn was blown, and David's men returned from the chase of the rebels. They took the dead body of the rebel prince, cast it into a pit in the forest, and piled a great cairn of stones upon

it. "Let me run to the King," said Ahimaaz, the son of Zadok the priest, "and bear him tidings of God's judgment upon His enemies." "Nay," answered Joab, "thou shalt bear no tidings today, because the King's son is dead."

An Ethiopian slave stood by. "Go thou," said Joab, "tell the King what thou hast seen." The Ethiopian made salaam to his captain and ran. But Ahimaaz was not satisfied. "Come what may," he said, "let me run also." "Nay, my son," said Joab, "why should'st thou run? There will be no reward for thy tidings."

"Still let me go," he urged. "Run then," said Joab, and Ahimaaz sped fast by the way of the plain and outran the Ethiopian.

David sat by the gate of Mahanaim, and the watchman on the tower overhead shouted that a man came running alone. Then behind him appeared another, and all waited for the tidings which they brought. Ahimaaz panted up to the King with a cry of "Peace," fell on his face at David's feet, and blessed God for the overthrow of the rebels. David had but one word for him. "Is the young man Absalom safe?" Ahimaaz evaded the question. "When Joab dispatched us, I saw a great tumult; but what it was I knew not." Meantime the Ethiopian came up. "Tidings, my lord the King," he cried, "Jehovah hath avenged thee this day on all thine adversaries." But again the King had no word save one. "The young man Absalom—is he safe?" And the negro answered, "May all thine enemies be as that young man is."

It was enough. David went up into the little chamber of the gate-tower, weeping as he went; and his cry was, "O my son Absalom! my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" The grief of the King darkened the whole triumph of the day. The victors stole silently back into the city like men fleeing and ashamed of their flight; and overhead in the gate-tower the King wrapped his face in his mantle, and cried unceasingly, "O my son Absalom! O Absalom, my son, my son!"

In hot anger his grim captain strode into his presence. "Thou hast cast shame upon the faces of all the men that have saved thee and thine this day. Thou lovest thine enemies, and hatest thy

friends. What carest thou for princes or servants? Well I wot that thou hadst rejoiced had we all been slain today, if only Absalom had lived! Rouse thee, and speak home to the hearts of thy men. If thou dost not, I swear by God there will not be a man left to thee by nightfall; and that will be the worst thing that ever befell thee all thy days."

It was rough counsel, but wise. The King rose up, and sat in the gate of Mahanaim, and men picked up courage again and gathered round him. All over the land people were at odds with one another, and ever their hearts turned more and more to David again, till at last messages came to him from all corners of the kingdom, beseeching him to return. So the King crossed over Jordan, with all the princes of Judah for his escort.

When he landed, one man came and bowed low before him. It was Shimei, who cursed and stoned him as he fled from Absalom, and the pitiful creature whined for mercy. Abishai was as ready, now, to put a swift end to his pleadings as he had been ready to make an end of his cursings, but David would have none of it. "This day I know that I am King over Israel. Shall any man be put to death today?"

"Thou shalt not die," he said to the false traitor, and confirmed it with an oath.

Then came a better man, Barzillai, the stout old chief of Gilead, who had supplied the King's needs when he fled. "Come thou with me," said David to him, "and I will maintain thee in Jerusalem with me." Barzillai was wiser. "Nay," he said, "my days that are left are too few for such an honour; for I am eighty years old. What good are dainties to me, who can scarce discern between one food and another; or what pleasure can I take in the voice of singers? I should but be a burden to thee. Let me go back to mine own, to die in my own city and be laid beside my father and my mother. But here is my son Chimham, he shall do as thou wilt." "As thou wilt," said the King, and kissed and blessed the good old man; and Barzillai returned to his own home.

Ziba had told David that Merib-baal, Jonathan's son, only waited in Jerusalem for men's hearts to turn to him, that they might set him upon Saul's throne; but now the falseness of the

slander was made plain. For Merib-baal came to meet the King, unshorn and unkempt. Never had he cared to waste a thought upon his raiment from the day when the King fled till that when he came back in peace. Naught but his lameness had hindered him from accompanying David on his flight; and now he made his complaint of how his steward had slandered him to the King. But David was too hasty to do full justice. "Trouble me not with thy matters," he said. "I have spoken. Thou and Ziba divide the land." It was poor thanks to Merib-baal for his loyalty; but he made no complaint. "Indeed," he said, "let him take all, so long as my lord the King has come again in peace to his own house."

(11) "THE OLD ORDER CHANGETH"

NOW was David restored in peace again to the throne. Yet, even so, the curse of blood seemed to rest upon the land. For rebellion broke out again among the tribes, and in the putting of it down there was wrought another evil deed. For David, weary of the ruthless sons of Zeruiah, had made Amasa captain of the host in the room of Joab, and Joab, a grim and remorseless man of war, smote Amasa treacherously, even while he gave him greeting, and left him lying in his blood on the King's highway.

Thereafter for three years there came sore famine on the land, and men held that it was sent in anger because no vengeance had been taken upon the house of Saul for his slaughter of the Gibeonites. Therefore David sent for the men of Gibeon, and offered them blood-money, that the Lord might turn away His anger from the land. But the Gibeonites answered, "We will take no silver nor gold of Saul's, nor of any of his house; neither for us shalt thou kill any man in Israel. But give us seven men of the house of the man that destroyed us, Saul, who was chosen of the Lord, and we will hang them in the hill of Saul, as an offering unto Jehovah." David had to yield to that fierce request. He would not let them harm Merib-baal, the son of Jonathan, because of the covenant

between him and the brave dead; but he gave to them the two sons whom Rizpah bore to Saul, and the five sons of Merab, Saul's elder daughter, and these seven the men of Gibeon hanged, as they had said.

It was spring-time when that dreadful deed was done; and all through the long, hot days of summer Rizpah, the mother of the first two of the seven, lay in sackcloth on the rock beneath her dead. Night and day she kept her awful watch, driving away the vultures and the jackals from the dreadful things that had once been her sons, until at last in autumn the rains broke. Men told the King of that ghastly vigil of love, and the King's heart smote him for the woman, and for his old friends of youthful days. He gathered the bones of Saul and Jonathan, that the Philistines had hanged in Beth-shan, and the men of Jabesh-Gilead rescued, and the bones of the seven victims of the Gibeonites, and he gave them all honourable burial in the tomb of the house of Saul.

After famine, came pestilence. There came into David's heart the wish to know the number of his people, and he bade Joab, the captain of the host, go through all the tribes of Israel and bring back the tale of their numbers. Much against his will, and with many misgivings, Joab did the King's bidding, and, after nine months and twenty days, he brought back word that the fighting men of all the nation were thirteen hundred thousand men. David's heart misgave him at the thought of what he had done, and the next day came Gad the prophet. "Choose thee," he said, "one of three things—either three years of famine, or three months of overthrow before the sword of thine enemies, or three days of the sword of Jehovah, the pestilence, throughout all the land. Take counsel with thyself what answer I shall give to Him that sent me."

Then said David, "I am in sore straits, yet let me fall into God's hand, for His mercies are many; let me not fall into the hand of man." So the plague came, and seventy thousand of the men of Israel died before its burning breath. David deemed that the Holy City was doomed because of his folly, and as he went forth to pray to God for his town, it seemed to him that he saw the figure of God's destroying angel hovering between heaven and

earth, his drawn sword stretched out over Jerusalem. The King and all his courtiers fell upon their faces, and David cried to the Lord, "I have sinned; but as for these sheep, what have they done? Let judgment fall on me and on my house; but let not the people be plagued."

Thereat came the prophet Gad again. "Build thee an altar to Jehovah," he said, "in the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite." So David came to the threshing-floor. The Jebusite was threshing wheat, and when he saw the King he came forth and bowed low before him; but his four sons ran and hid themselves. Then said David to the old man: "Grant me this threshing-floor of thine, that I may build thereon an altar to Jehovah, that the plague may be stayed. I will give thee the full price for it."

Araunah had a kingly soul. "Take it to thee," he said, "and let my lord the King do what he wills with it. I give thee the oxen for sacrifice, my threshing instruments for wood, my wheat for the meat-offering; I give it all."

"Nay," said David, "I will not take what is thine to give to God, nor offer Him sacrifices that cost me nothing. I will buy it for the full price." So the King weighed out six hundred shekels of gold to Araunah, and piled stones together for an altar, and made sacrifice there to Jehovah; and lo! it seemed to him that the destroying angel hovering over the city put up his sword into the sheath, and the plague was stayed.

And when David saw that marvel, he said, "This is the House of Jehovah, and this is the altar of the burnt-offering for Israel." And because the task of building God's House was to fall, not upon him, but upon his son, he set himself to do all that he could to make it easier. "For," said he, "Solomon, my son, is young and tender, and the House that is to be builded for the Lord must be exceeding magnifical, of fame and of glory throughout all countries. I will therefore now make preparation for it." So the King gathered together great store of iron, and bronze, and cedar wood, of gold and silver, of marble, and of costly stones of fair colours; and he sought out cunning workmen to hew the wood and stone, and to mould the bronze. And all the headmen of the tribes gave costly gifts to the treasure of Jehovah's House; and all was done

with joy and a willing heart. When David saw it all he blessed God. "Who am I," he said, "and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly? For all things come of Thee, and of Thine own have we given Thee. We are strangers before Thee, and sojourners, as were all our fathers: our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding."

Then the old King prayed that God would bless Solomon, and give him a perfect heart; and at last he turned to the great gathering of the people, and bade them bless the Lord their God. So the multitude bowed their heads and worshipped.

One more trouble still lay before David ere he passed to his rest. Solomon was destined to be his heir; but Adonijah, another of the King's sons, full brother to the dead Absalom, plotted with Joab, and with Abiathar the priest, to win the throne for himself. Bathsheba, the mother of Solomon, and Nathan the prophet, brought the news of the plot to David. The old lion raised himself at once in anger. "Call me Zadok the priest, and Nathan, and Benaiah, the captain of the guard," he said; and he bade them set Solomon on the royal mule, and carry him down to the Spring Gihon, and proclaim him King before all the people. Benaiah, the stout and true soldier, bowed. "Amen," he said, "as Jehovah was with my lord the King, so be He with Solomon, and make his throne greater than the throne of my lord King David."

So the priest, the prophet, and the soldier set Solomon on the mule in the midst of the body-guard of Cretans and Philistines; and at Gihon they anointed him king and blew the silver trumpets; and all the people shouted with one voice, "God save King Solomon." At the very sound of what had been done the hearts of Adonijah's traitors melted within them. They fled, every man his own way; and Adonijah hastened in terror to the altar of burnt-offering, and laid hold on the horns of it, to claim sanctuary. Solomon had no mind to stain the early days of his reign with blood. "If he will show himself worthy, not a hair of his head shall be harmed; but if wickedness be found in him, he shall die." So the young King spake; and the baffled pretender came and bowed before his brother. "Go to thine house," said Solomon; and Adonijah slunk away.

At last the day came when David must lay down his burden. "I go the way of all the earth," he said to Solomon. "Be thou strong, therefore, and shew thyself a man." Then he bade his son keep Jehovah's commandments, that God's blessing might attend him, and gave him his last charges. And so the great King turned his face to the wall, and fell on the long sleep, like his fathers before him. And a mourning nation buried him in the City of David. Forty years he had reigned over Israel. Now he died in a good old age, full of days, riches, and honour; and Solomon, his son, reigned in his stead.

(12) "WISDOM IS THE PRINCIPAL THING"

SO David passed, and Solomon sat upon the throne of his father. Ere he had reigned long, he rid himself, on one ground or another, of the men who had troubled the kingdom in the latter days of the dead king. Adonijah was slain, because Solomon suspected him of plotting once more to gain the crown; Abiathar was thrust from the priesthood and banished for his share in Adonijah's plot; Joab, the grey old war-wolf, was hewn down by Benaiah as he stood holding the horns of the altar; and Shimei, who had cursed David in the days of Absalom's rebellion, fell, by Benaiah's hand also, because he had broken the bounds assigned to him in the King's pardon. They that troubled Israel fell one by one into bloody graves, and the young king sat firm and strong upon the throne. Even so great a king as the Pharaoh of Egypt deemed him a man worth befriending, and gave him a princess of the royal house of Egypt in marriage; and for his royal bride Solomon built a stately palace.

Now while his reign was yet young, the King went up to the hill sanctuary at Gibeon, and made a great sacrifice of a thousand burnt-offerings upon the altar. That night God spake to Solomon in a dream as he slept, and said to him, "Ask what I shall give thee." And Solomon answered: "Jehovah my God, thou hast made Thy servant king, instead of David, my father; and I am but

a little child, unable to guide my steps. Thou hast set me over a people like the dust of the earth in multitude; give me therefore Wisdom and knowledge to judge Thy people, and to know good from evil."

The answer pleased the Lord. "Because thou hast asked this thing," He said, "and hast not asked long life, nor riches, nor the slaying of thine enemies—Wisdom hast thou asked, Wisdom shall be thine, such as no man had before thee and none shall have after thee. And with Wisdom there shall be given thee what thou hast not asked, riches and honour, so that there shall be no king like thee all thy days." Solomon awoke, and behold, it was a dream; but of the dreams that come true.

Then he went back to Jerusalem and offered sacrifice before the Ark of Jehovah.

It was not long before God's promise was tested. Two women came to the King's judgment seat, bearing with them two children, one living, the other dead. "O my lord," said the first woman, "we be two women dwelling in one house, and each of us had one child. There was no one else with us in the house. This woman's child died in the night; and she arose at midnight, and took my child from me while I slept, and laid her dead child in the place of mine. When I awoke in the morning, the child by my side was dead; and when I beheld it, lo, it was not my son." "Nay, said the other, "the living child is my son, and the dead is thine." So they argued and contradicted one another before the King.

"Bring me a sword," said Solomon; and a sword was brought. "Divide the living child in two," he said to one of his guard, "and give half to the one woman, and half to the other." Then the mother's heart spoke in the true mother of the child. "O my lord," she cried, "give her the living child,—never slay it." But the other said sullenly: "Neither mine nor thine shall it be. Cut it in twain." And the King gave judgment: "Give to the first woman the living child, and do it no harm, for she is its mother." The fame of that judgment went through the land; and all men feared the King, for they saw that God had made him wise to do justice.

(13) "AN HABITATION FOR THE MIGHTY GOD"

NOW in the spring-time of the fourth year of King Solomon's reign, four hundred and eighty years after the men of Israel came out of Egypt, began the building of that House, "exceeding magnifical," that David had been forbidden to build. For long the King had been making preparations for the mighty task. Away on the slopes of Lebanon his servants wrought, ten thousand in each gang, along with the woodmen of Hiram, the King of Tyre. They hewed down the stately cedars, dragged them down to the sea, and rafted them down the coast to Joppa. Eighty thousand men hewed marble and costly stone of all kinds in the mountains, and seventy thousand toiled at the transport of the blocks, with three thousand three hundred overseers and foremen to guide everything aright.

Each woodman and each stone-hewer had his measured plan to work from, so that the beams and the blocks were all squared and shaped or ever they were brought to Jerusalem, and no sound of axe or hammer was heard as the stately building grew. The Temple was not anything like the vast temples of Egypt or Babylon in size, for, apart from its court, it measured but one hundred and four feet in length, and thirty-five feet in breadth; but all about, it was most splendid in material and workmanship. Like the old Tabernacle, it had two chambers. Innermost was the Holy of Holies, a chamber thirty-five feet square, panelled with cedar, carved and gilded; and in this chamber were set two great guardian cherubim. They were carved in olive wood and gilded. Seventeen and a half feet they stood in height, and their outstretched wings were the same in span from tip to tip. Their faces turned eastwards to the door of the Most Holy Place. The inner wing-tip of each cherub touched that of his fellow, and the outer touched the farther wall. Under their shadowing wings the Ark of the Covenant was to rest.

The outer chamber, the Holy Place, was twice the size of the

Holy of Holies, and unlike the more sacred room, which was utterly dark, it was dimly lit by small windows near the roof. It, too, was panelled with carved and gilded cedar, and a folding door of olive wood shut it off from the inner chamber. Across the door hung an embroidered curtain of blue and purple, white and scarlet; and before it stood the gilded table where the shewbread was offered.

The priest entered the Holy Place through a stately porch in front of which stood two great bronze pillars thirty feet in height, and cast by Hiram, the cunning workman of Tyre, their capitals adorned with pomegranates and lilies. The name of the one was Jachin and the name of the other Boaz, that is, "Steadfastness" and "Strength." Beyond the porch was the great open court around the Temple, surrounded by a triple colonnade roofed with cedar. And there Solomon set the great bronze altar of burnt-offering, and the bronze water-tank, "the Sea," that held the water for the priests' ablutions. More than seventeen feet it measured across its brim, and it was set upon the backs of twelve bronze oxen. They stood in threes, facing east, west, north, and south.

The roof of the House of God, fifty-two feet above the cypress floor, was of cedar and cypress wood. Everywhere within the building was the shimmer of gold and the sparkle of precious stones. The very lamp-stands, the basins, the spoons, the tongs, the censers, for the service of the House were of pure gold, and the gold plating in the Holy of Holies alone was of the value of well-nigh four million pounds.

So splendid and so wonderful was the House which the son of David built to the glory of Jehovah. Seven and a half years it was in building, from the early spring when work began to the autumn when all was finished. And after harvest, when the work was done, the King summoned all Israel to a great dedication feast. The priest and the Levites brought up all the ancient relics of the Tabernacle, with all the sacred vessels that David had prepared and dedicated, and laid them all reverently in the store-houses that ran round about the Temple walls. Then the priests took up the Ark of the Covenant that had gone before Israel in all their wan-

derings. They bore it into the Holy of Holies, and set it down beneath the shadowy wings of the mighty cherubim and drew out the bearing-poles from the golden rings on either side of it. They were needed no more, for the Ark of God's strength had arisen into its rest. They came forth from the sanctuary, and as they came, the white-robed Temple choir, with cymbals, lutes, harps, and trumpets, lifted up their voices in a great psalm of praise:

"O give thanks unto the Lord; for He is good:
For His mercy endureth for ever!"

And at that sound, as in the days of old, the bright cloud of glory descended upon the Temple and filled all its courts, so that none could bear its splendour; for the glory of the Lord had filled the House of the Lord.

In the midst of the Temple court the King kneeled upon a bronze platform, beside the altar, and spread his hands towards Heaven in the sight of all the gathered thousands of Israel. "Lord God of Israel," he prayed in the hushed silence, "there is no god like Thee in the heaven, nor in the earth, which keepest covenant and shewest mercy unto Thy servants that walk before Thee with all their heart. Now, O Lord God of Israel, let Thy word be proved, which Thou didst speak unto Thy servant David. But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee; how much less this House which I have built!" Then the King besought God to watch over His own House day and night, and to hearken to all the prayers that should be offered in it. He prayed for his people in time of sin, of overthrow in battle, of drought, and famine, and plague, for the stranger whose heart should turn towards the God of Israel, and for the captives of God's people in a strange land, that wherever and however they lifted their hearts and their thoughts towards the sanctuary on Mount Zion and the God who dwelt there, the desire of their hearts might be granted to them.

So Solomon pled with God; and thus he closed his petitions: "Now, therefore, arise, O Lord God, into Thy rest, Thou, and the Ark of Thy strength: let Thy priests, O Lord God, be clothed with salvation, and let Thy saints rejoice in goodness. O Lord God,

SOLOMON AND THE QUEEN OF SHEBA.
(I Kings, x, 1–10.)

turn not away the face of Thine anointed: remember the mercies of David, Thy servant." When the prayer was ended, God gave a sign. For fire fell from heaven before all the multitude and consumed all the sacrifices that lay upon the brazen altar. And at that great sight, all the people bowed on their faces to the ground, and cried again:

"O give thanks unto the Lord; for He is good:
For His mercy endureth for ever!"

So for seven days all Israel feasted and gave thanks to Jehovah for His goodness; and on the eighth day the King dismissed them, and all scattered to their homes again full of joy and wonder at all that God had done for His people and for the house of David.

(14) WISDOM, SPLENDOUR, AND PRIDE

LL things went well with King Solomon, and with his people. In his days the nation multiplied till they were numberless as the sand by the sea-shore. There was peace on every side, so that from north to south every man could sit in safety under his vine and fig-tree and fear no enemy. Never was such abundance or such wealth in the land. Silver was thought nothing of; for it was as plentiful in Jerusalem as the stones underfoot. The little kingdom that could scarce withstand the raiding tribes around was now grown into an empire, and from far Euphrates in the north to Gaza of the Philistines in the south, all men were Solomon's vassals. Far in the wilderness he built Tadmor, that men now call Palmyra; and of all the kings of Israel he was the first to send out ships to trade with far-off lands.

On the Great Sea, that we call the Mediterranean, he had a fleet which sailed, along with the ships of Tyre, to far-off Spain. Once in three years it made the double voyage, bringing back to Palestine gold and silver, elephants' tusks, baboons, and peacocks. On the burning shores of the Red Sea, at Ezion-geber, the Tyrian shipbuilders built him another fleet, and lent him pilots for the

southern voyage. Southwards they sailed to the golden land of Ophir, and thence they brought the King vast store of gold. The gold that came to him from all quarters in a single year was more than four millions.

Yet, indeed, it was all needed; for never was such splendour as that of the son of the shepherd lad of Bethlehem. His garrison cities were full of picked troops. Fourteen hundred war chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen followed his banner; and his palace-walls were hung with hundreds of shields of beaten gold for his body-guard to carry when he rode abroad through Jerusalem. If he spent more than seven years in building a house to Jehovah, he spent thirteen in building for himself a palace, that stretched from the cedar-pillared "House of the Forest of Lebanon," on the southern edge of Mount Moriah, up to the very wall of the Temple court.

In the central hall of the palace stood the throne of the great King. It was of ivory overlaid with beaten gold. By the arms of the throne stood two golden lions. Six steps led up to the royal seat, and on each step stood two golden lions, one on either side. No king on earth had a throne so costly.

Yet the man was not all splendour and show alone. God had not failed of His promise to make him wise; and wise he was above all the men of his time, or of ancient days. He spake three thousand proverbs, and the songs that he sang were a thousand and five. He gave his heart to seek out God's wonders in the world, and taught men of the growth of all manner of trees, from the great, dark cedars that toss their arms on Lebanon, to the stunted hyssop bush that grows out of the crack in a wall, and of the life of beast and bird, reptile and fish.

The fame of Solomon and his wisdom spread abroad through all lands. Far away in the mountains of Abyssinia, Balkis, the wise queen of Sheba, heard the rumour of it, and came with a great caravan of camels, bearing gold and jewels and spices, to test for herself the wisdom of which she heard such tales. All that she knew and thought, she told him, and many dark and subtle questions she asked him, to prove him withal; but nothing was too hard for the wise King. And when she had proved his wisdom, and seen all the splendour of his house, and the rich provision of his table,

and the stately service and bearing of his servants and cup-bearers, and the great stairway whereby he went up from his palace to the Temple, the queen was all amazement. "All that I heard of thine acts and thy wisdom was true," she cried. "I could not believe it till I had seen it with my own eyes; and lo, the one half of thy greatness and wisdom was not told to me. Surely God loved Israel when He set thee on the throne to do justice."

She gave King Solomon vast store of gold and jewels and such abundance of costly spices as had never been known in the land; and on his part he gave to her all that her heart could desire. So the wise queen and her escort went back again content to far-off Abyssinia.

In spite of all his glory, all was not well with Solomon, or with his land. Someone had to pay for all the pomp and luxury, and though the King drew a great revenue from foreign trade and from the burdens laid upon the aliens in the kingdom, yet the taxation and, above all, the forced labour on the King's vast works, lay like a heavy yoke on the common people. Solomon was too strong and too wise for any one to deem it safe to rebel against him; yet there were many murmurs and much hidden discontent.

Moreover, as he grew older, the King became more and more the slave of the many foreign wives whom he had gathered into his harem. To please them he turned from the worship of Jehovah, and worshipped Astarte, the vile goddess of Phœnicia, and Moloch, the cruel god to whom the Ammonites made burnt-offerings of their children, and Chemosh, the false god of Moab; and in the very face of the great Temple on Mount Moriah he reared shrines to these abominations. Twice God warned him in vision of the evil that must come of his apostacy; but he would not listen. A third time the Lord spake unto him, and said, "Since thou hast done these things, and hast disobeyed My commandments, I will take the kingdom from thee, and give it to thy servant. Yet for David's sake I will not do it in thy days; but I will take it from the hand of thy son. Even so one tribe shall be left to him for thy father's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake which I have chosen."

Adversaries began to rise against the King from without—Hadad, the son of that King of Edom over whom David and Joab had

triumphed, and Rezon, an exile from Zobah, who had usurped the throne of Damascus in Syria. And in especial there rose up an enemy in Israel. Jeroboam, son of Nebat, a man of the tribe of Ephraim, was master over the forced levy of his tribe; and it befell that as he journeyed from Jerusalem to Ephraim, he met the prophet Abijah of Shiloh. They two were alone upon the upland moor, and Abijah caught hold of the new cloak that Jeroboam was wearing, and rent it into twelve pieces. Ten of them he gave back to Jeroboam. "Take thee these ten pieces," he said, "for Jehovah has spoken, saying, 'I will rend ten tribes out of the hand of Solomon, and will give them to thee. Unto his son I will give one tribe, that My servant David may always have a lamp before Me in Jerusalem.'"

Solomon heard of the prophecy of Abijah, and would fain have made an end of the new pretender to the throne; but Jeroboam fled for his life into Egypt, and dwelt there with Shishak, the Pharaoh of Egypt, until the King was dead. So the evening of Solomon's brilliant day closed down amid dark and threatening clouds. For forty years, like his father, he reigned over Israel; then he died, and was buried in the City of David; and Rehoboam, his son, reigned in his stead.

(15) A FOOL AND HIS FOLLY

OLOMON was not long in his grave before the storm broke. King Rehoboam went to Shechem for his crowning, and all the tribes of Israel gathered to meet him. With them came Jeroboam; for when men heard that Solomon was dead they sent messengers to Egypt and brought the exile back to be their leader. So Jeroboam and the men of Israel laid their grievances before the young King. "Thy father," they said, "made our yoke heavy. Now, therefore, make the yoke of our service lighter, and we will be thy servants." "Come back to me in three days, and I will answer you," said Rehoboam.

Meanwhile the King sought counsel. First he turned to the grey-beards who had been of the council of his father, and sought their rede. "Speak kind and gracious words to the people," they

said, "and they will be thy servants for ever." But the advice of the old men liked the King ill. He turned to the young hot-heads who had been reared at court with him in pride and insolence. "What counsel give ye, that I should answer this people who ask me to make their yoke lighter?" Like fools, as they were, they counselled him. "Say to the people, 'My little finger shall be thicker than my father's loins. My father laid a heavy yoke upon you, I will add to your yoke; my father beat you with whips, I will scourge you with scorpions.'" And the King's foolish heart agreed with their folly.

On the third day came Jeroboam and all the people before the King again. In his insolent pride Rehoboam flung scorn upon their request, and spake to them as his young fools had bidden him. The mad words were like fire among flax. At once a fierce cry arose. "What portion have we in David? What inheritance in the son of Jesse? To your tents, O Israel. Now look to thine own house, David." All the northern tribes scattered to their homes, and Rehoboam was left with naught but the tribes of Judah and Benjamin loyal to him.

One effort he made to bring the rebels back to their allegiance; but he had better have spared it, for it was of a piece with the rest of his folly. To men who were mad with rebellion against over-hard taxation he sent as peacemaker, Adoram, the chief of the tax-gatherers. Small wonder that the angry people took the sending of such an envoy as a new insult, and stoned the poor wretch with stones till he died. At the news of that slaying, King Rehoboam got him to his chariot, and fled for his life to Jerusalem. So all the northern tribes broke away from the house of David; and that breach was never healed.

In Jerusalem Rehoboam plucked up heart, and gathered a great army out of Judah and Benjamin to force the rebels back to loyalty. But God sent Shemaiah the prophet, and before the King and his army, he said, "Thus saith the Lord, 'Ye shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren, the children of Israel: return every man to his house; for this thing is from Me.'" At that command Rehoboam's army melted away, and the King was left to bear his loss as best he might.

Part VI. *Stories of the Decline and Fall*

(*a*) The Northern Kingdom

(1) THE MAN WHO MADE ISRAEL SIN

NOW it seemed as though Jeroboam's rebellion had succeeded to his utmost desire. Ten tribes had broken from the house of David and followed the rebel leader; and the very voice of God kept back the rightful King from fighting for his kingdom. But deep down in Jeroboam's heart there lay a great fear. As he thought of Solomon's splendid Temple in Jerusalem, and of the annual pilgrimages that went from all the ends of the land to worship at the Holy Mount, he felt that here lay a deadly danger to his mushroom kingship. Bit by bit as the men of the north met their old friends and comrades at the feasts, the quarrel would be forgotten, and the great memories of the days of King David would rise again. Men's hearts would turn to the old throne, and the usurper would meet the fate that always waits on unsuccessful rebellion.

So Jeroboam framed a plan to lay this dread for ever. Cunning and wonderfully wise it was, and it succeeded in its immediate purpose; but it sowed the seeds of corruption, ruin, and apostacy, and wrought such evil in Israel that, ever since that day, the man who framed it is remembered as "Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin." He made two images of gold, like the golden calf that Aaron made in Horeb of old, and set them up, one far north, in Dan, to serve the northern half of his people, the other southwards in Bethel, to serve the southern half. "It is too much," he said to his people, "for you to go up to Jerusalem. Behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." From the scum of the nation he ordained priests to

make offerings in imitation of the Temple worship at Jerusalem; and at Dan and at Bethel the rebel King himself made great sacrifices to his new beast-gods. For convenience and novelty the thing liked the people well, and by Jeroboam's wily statecraft they were snared, almost unwittingly, into the sin of idolatry; and from that time Israel went from bad to worse.

It fell one day that Jeroboam the King stood by the altar in Bethel, ready to burn incense before his idol, when of a sudden there broke from the crowd a man of Judah. Up to the altar he came, and before the King and the people he cried: "O altar, altar, thus saith the Lord. A son, Josiah by name, shall be born to David's house. Upon thee shall he slay the priests that minister around thee, and upon thee shall he burn their bones. And for a sign that this shall be, behold, the altar shall be rent, and the ashes on it poured out." So, as he spake, the stones of the altar cracked and fell apart before men's eyes, and the ashes ran down upon the ground.

In fierce anger the King stretched out his hand. "Lay hold on the man!" he shouted to his guards. But no man moved, for in the very moment Jeroboam stiffened, as though turned to stone. The outstretched arm was paralysed, so that he could not draw it back again. A great fear fell upon the King. "Intreat the Lord thy God for me," he said humbly to the prophet, "and pray that my hand may be restored to me again." And as the prophet prayed power came back once more to the stiffened muscles. The King would fain have taken the man of God with him, and shown him kindness; but he refused with contempt. "If thou wouldst give me half thine house," he said, "I would not go with thee, nor taste thy bread, for so came God's word to me, 'Eat no bread, drink no water, turn not back again in the way by which thou camest.'" So he departed homewards by another way.

Well for him had he shown as stout a countenance to others as to the King. For there dwelt in Bethel an aged man who also had the vision of things not seen of common folk, and his sons brought to him the story of all the strange things that had happened in the town that day. Some demon of mischief entered into the old man's heart. "Saddle me the ass," he cried to his sons, and rode

after the prophet from Judah. He came upon the man resting in the shade of an oak. "Turn with me, and eat bread," he said to him. The man of Judah answered him as he had answered Jeroboam. "Nay, but I also am a prophet, even as thou," said the ancient wizard of Bethel, "and the angel of the Lord bade me bring thee back to eat and drink in my house." But he lied unto him.

Dreaming of no evil, yet faithless to God's command, the man of Judah turned back with the old deceiver, and ate and drank in his house. Thereat there came upon the withered hypocrite the moment of vision. "Thus saith the Lord," he cried to his astonished guest, "'Because thou hast disobeyed the commandment of the Lord, and hast turned back to eat and drink in the place forbidden, thy carcase shall never be buried in the tomb of thy fathers.'" Then the man of Judah made haste to be gone, and his deceiver sped him on his way, and gave him for greater speed the ass on which he himself had ridden on his errand of mischief. But the doom of disobedience was waiting by the way. A lion met him and slew him and stood over his dead body in the road, while the ass stood by unharmed. Men, as they passed, marvelled at the strange sight of the dead man with lion and ass keeping watch over his broken clay. They told their story in Bethel, and it came to the ears of the old prophet.

"It is the man of God who disobeyed," he said. Forth he fared to where that strange three stood and lay. It was as men had said—the dead carcase lying in the way, undevoured, and the ass, unharmed, keeping watch with the lion. What the old deceiver of Bethel had meant, or whether he had foreseen from the beginning all that was to come of his deceit, who knows? He took up the poor, marred corpse of the man whom he had wiled to his death, buried it in his own tomb, and mourned for the dead as for his own brother. "When I am dead," he said to his sons, "bury me beside this man of God—my bones beside his bones. Surely God's word was with him, and what he spake against the altar in Bethel, and all the false worship of the land, shall verily come to pass."

Little consolation did his new gods bring to the King of Israel when sorrow came to his own house. Abijah, his son, fell sick;

and the father's heart turned in its anxiety towards a true man of God. "Disguise thyself," he said to his wife, "that men may not know thee for a queen. Take with thee a common present—bread and cakes and a pot of honey—and go to Shiloh, to Abijah the prophet, who told me that I should be king in Israel. He will tell thee what shall become of the boy." Abijah was blind for very age; but God had forewarned him, and given him a message of doom to speak. "Come in, thou wife of Jeroboam," he said, as the queen's foot was heard at his door. "Why feignest thou thyself to be another woman? I am sent unto thee with hard tidings." Indeed it was a sore message that he poured into her ears. Because of her husband's disobedience and idolatry, his house was to be swept away, as men cart away filth, till none was left to him. "Him that dieth of Jeroboam in the city shall the dogs eat: for Jehovah hath spoken it."

"Get thee to thine own house," he said to the terrified woman, "and when thy feet enter into the city, thy child shall die. He only of the house of Jeroboam shall come to the grave in peace, with all Israel mourning for him, because in his heart alone was found good towards the God of Israel."

With that dreadful message in her ears, the poor queen got her home to Tirzah; and as her feet crossed the palace threshold, her son died. For two and twenty years, the man who made Israel to sin reigned in the northern kingdom; then he died and went to his own place, and Nadab, his son, reigned in his stead,—not for long.

(2) JEHOVAH OR BAAL?

HEN Jeroboam had gone to his grave, there followed a time of strife and misery for Israel. Nadab, his son, reigned for a short two years—long enough to show the evil that was in him; then one of his captains, Baasha, of the tribe of Issachar, slew him in the camp before Gibbethon. The murderer seized the crown, and made himself secure by the slaughter of all the house of Jeroboam; and so God's doom that he spake by

Abijah was fulfilled. For twenty-four years of warfare and evil-doing Baasha reigned in Israel; then he, too, died, and his son Elah reigned in his stead. Elah shared the fate that had fallen upon Nadab; for his chariot captain, Zimri, murdered him in a drunken revel at Tirzah, and reigned in his place for a brief week. Seven days after the slaying of Elah came Omri, chief of the host of Israel that was warring against the Philistines, and snatched Tirzah from the hands of the usurper. Zimri saw that all was lost. He went into the royal palace, fired it over his head, and so died.

Then came civil war through all the land. Half Israel followed Omri, and half followed another pretender, Tibni, the son of Ginath. But the victory was with Omri, and Tibni went the way of unsuccessful pretenders. The new usurper shifted the seat of the kingdom from blood-stained Tirzah. He bought a hill from Shemer for two talents of silver, and there he built a new royal city which was to be the capital of the Northern Kingdom to the end; and the new city he named Samaria, after the man whose land he had bought. Twelve years he reigned, and when he died his son Ahab came to the throne.

Of all the evil kings who reigned over Israel, Ahab proved himself the worst. For he wedded a woman more wicked than he was himself, Jezebel, daughter of Eth-baal, King of Sidon; and she brought with her into Israel the vile worship of the Phœnician Baal. The King and his wife built a temple to their false god in Samaria, and almost all the nation turned from the worship of Jehovah, and copied their King in his idolatry. So God's anger grew hot against the faithless King and people, and he sent them a stern and terrible messenger of judgment.

Suddenly there came before the King a prophet from the wild hills of Gilead beyond Jordan. Elijah was his name, and he was rough and stern as the rocks and hills from which he came,—a strong, shaggy man of the wilderness, who cared nothing for a king's frown. "As Jehovah of Israel liveth, whom I serve," he cried to the astonished King, "there shall not be dew nor rain these years, save at my word."

Then he was gone, no man knew whither. But God had bidden him hide himself by the brook Cherith, that runs into Jordan.

There he dwelt among the rocks, and the ravens brought him bread and flesh morning and evening, and he drank of the brook. Meanwhile on all the land had fallen a great drought. Day after day, month after month, the heavens were as brass overhead, till the springs ceased to flow, and man and beast perished of famine and thirst. The furious King searched every corner of the land for the prophet who had foretold the evil—nay, he even sent envoys to the lands around in quest of him, and would not be satisfied until they had sworn that Elijah was not among them. In her rage the savage queen Jezebel slew the prophets of Jehovah, and would have cut them all off, had not the King's steward Obadiah, a god-fearing man, hidden an hundred of them in a cave, and fed them secretly. But neither by envoys nor by murderers could Elijah be found, and day by day the drought was fiercer, and the famine grew amain.

At last the brook Cherith itself dried up. Then God's word came to Elijah—"Get thee to Zaréphath of the Sidonians, and dwell there; I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee." Elijah came to the gate of the little sea-coast town. Outside the walls a widow woman was gathering sticks, and the prophet called her. "Bring me, I pray thee, a little water to drink," he said, and as she turned away, he called after her, "Bring me a little bread also, I pray." She turned on him bitterly. "Bread! I have naught but a handful of meal in a barrel and a few drops of oil in a flask. I have gathered these sticks to bake one last cake for me and my son, that we may eat it and then die." "Fear nothing," said Elijah, "go, make your fire, and bake me first of all a little cake and afterwards make ready for thee and thy son. Thus saith Jehovah of Israel, 'The meal shall not waste, nor the oil run dry until Jehovah giveth rain upon the earth.'"

Wonderingly the woman did Elijah's bidding, and for many a day she and her son and the prophet ate of that wondrous store. Ever there was the handful of meal in the barrel, and the few drops of oil in the flask, never more, never less than at the first. Yet it seemed as though death had only spared the house in one fashion to smite it in another. The woman's son sickened, and

the sickness waxed so sore that ere long the young life flickered out. In her bitterness of soul the woman turned upon Elijah. "What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God?" she cried. "Art thou come to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son?" "Give me thy son," he answered. He took the cold little body from her arms, carried it into the garret where he slept, and laid it upon the bed. Then he cried eagerly to the Lord, "O Lord God, hast Thou brought evil upon the widow with whom I dwell, by slaying her son?" Clasping the boy in his arms, he cried again, "O Lord my God, I pray Thee let this child's soul come into him again," and lo! the life came back into the dead clay, and the boy revived. Elijah carried him down to his mother. "See, thy son liveth!" he said. And she answered him, "Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of Jehovah in thy mouth is truth."

The drought was in its third year, and the famine was sore in Samaria, when God's word came again to Elijah. "Go, shew thyself unto Ahab, and I will send rain upon the earth." It fell out that Ahab and his good steward Obadiah had gone to search the land for whatever grass they could find where springs or brooks had once flowed; if perchance they might gather enough to save the horses and mules. Ahab went one way, Obadiah another; and as the steward went, suddenly Elijah stood before him. Obadiah knew the grim figure that stood in the way. Bowing humbly before the prophet, he said, "Is it thou, my lord Elijah?" "It is I," said the prophet. "Go, tell thy lord, 'Behold Elijah!'" "Nay," said Obadiah, "Whatever have I done, that thou seekest to send me to my death at the hand of Ahab? In all kingdoms he has sought thee. If I go now and tell him 'Elijah is here,' then as soon as I am gone, God's spirit will carry thee whither I know not; and when Ahab seeks thee and finds thee not, surely he will slay me." "By the life of Jehovah of Hosts," said Elijah, "I will shew myself unto him today."

Obadiah set off to meet the King, and ere long Ahab and Elijah stood face to face. Ahab's anger flamed up as he saw the prophet. "Is it thou, thou troubler of Israel?" he cried. "I have not troubled Israel," Elijah sternly answered, "but thou and thy

father's house; for ye have forsaken the commandments of Jehovah, and have followed Baal. Send, therefore, and gather together all Israel unto Mount Carmel, and the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal, and the four hundred prophets of Ashtaroth which eat at Jezebel's table." The whole nation was gathered together to the long slope of Carmel that looks westwards over the Great Sea, and the King stood by them. On one side were the long ranks of the false prophets, on the other the grim, solitary figure of Elijah. The man of Gilead stepped forward and spoke to the vast multitude. "How long will ye hover between two branches?" he cried. "If Jehovah be God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him." But no man of Israel dared lift his voice in answer.

Then Elijah spake again. "I, only I, remain a prophet of Jehovah; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty. Here be two bullocks. Let them take one, and cut it in pieces, and lay it on wood upon the altar, putting no fire under, and I will do the like with the other. Then call ye on your gods, and I will call on the name of Jehovah; and the god that answereth by fire, let him be God." And the people shouted, "The word is good."

Then Elijah turned to the prophets of Baal. "Ye are many," he said, "Choose ye your bullock, and make it ready for sacrifice, and call on your god; but put no fire under." They laid the bullock on the altar in the sight of all, and from morning till noontide they besought their god, "O Baal, hear us!" But there was no answer. With fierce irony Elijah jeered at them. "Cry with a big voice!" he said. "For Baal is a god—he is musing, or he is gone aside, or he is on a journey—or perhaps he is asleep, and ye must waken him." The men of Baal shouted despairingly to the blank heavens. They slashed their flesh with swords and spears, till the blood streamed down. The afternoon dragged past, the sun was sinking towards the western sea, and the time of evening sacrifice drew nigh; and still Baal gave no sign.

"Come near to me," said Elijah solemnly; and the great crowd drew close to the solitary figure. He took twelve stones, one for each of the tribes, and piled them together on the spot where an ancient altar of Jehovah had stood; and round the altar he dug a

deep trench. On the stones he laid wood, and on the wood he laid the flesh of the slain bullock. "Fill four barrels with water," he said, "and pour it on the offering and the wood." Three times it was done, till the sacrifice was drenched and the trench around the altar was full of water.

Then, when the hour of evening sacrifice was come, Elijah called upon his God. "Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, show this day that Thou art God. Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that all this people may know that Thou art Jehovah, and that Thou hast turned their hearts back again." At that cry the lightning of heaven fell upon the sacrifice and the altar, and when the levin-bolt had passed, naught was left—the very water in the trench was dried up. In sheer terror the people fell upon their faces. "Jehovah, He is God!" they cried. "Jehovah, He is God." "Seize the prophets of Baal," cried Elijah. "Let not one of them escape." The beaten cheats were taken down the hillside to the brook Kishon; and there Elijah slew them to the last man.

Then he turned to the King, who stood gloomily watching. "Up to the feast," he said, "for there is a sound of abundance of rain." Ahab climbed the hill, and sat down to the feast of sacrifice; but Elijah passed on to the summit of Carmel, and there he sat him down, and laid his face between his knees, praying for rain. "Go up," he said to his servant, "and look seawards." The man climbed the highest ridge and looked out over the western sea, glittering in the level rays of the setting sun. "There is nothing," he said to his master, as he returned. Seven times he went, and at the seventh, he said, "A little cloud, like a man's hand, riseth out of the sea." "Get thee to Ahab," said Elijah, "and say unto him, 'Yoke and hasten, lest the rain stop thee.'"

Swiftly the sky grew black with high-piled clouds, and under their arch came rushing a mighty wind and driving rain. Ahab sprang into his chariot and drove furiously for Jezreel. God's strength came upon Elijah, and he drew his girdle close, and ran through the wild storm, before the galloping horses, to the gate of the city.

Baal was overthrown and Ahab cowed; but in the palace at Jezreel there was a woman fiercer and more stubborn than either.

The King told his sorry tale of defeat and death to his wife, and Jezebel's spirit flamed up in wrath to challenge the spirit of Elijah. She sent a fierce message to the prophet. "So, and more, may the gods do to me, if thy life be not as that of one of the dead men by tomorrow at this time." Elijah's sorely tried spirit quailed before this relentless hatred. Through the night of storm and rain, he and his servant fled southwards for dear life, and never halted till they reached Beer-sheba on the edge of the desert south of Judah. There he left his servant, and travelled on alone a day's march into the desolation that was dreary as his own soul. He cast himself down under the shade of a bush of broom and cried in sullen despair to Heaven, "I have had enough; slay me, O Lord; I am no better than my fathers." Then he sank into the slumber of exhaustion.

He was awakened by an angel's touch. "Arise, and eat," said God's messenger. There, beside him, was a fire, with bread and water. The weary man ate and drank, and sank to sleep again. Once more came the angel's touch and the command, "Arise, and eat, else the journey will be too great for thee." He rose and obeyed; and strengthened by the bread of God, he travelled for forty days and nights through the desert, until he reached the splintered cliffs of Sinai, the Mount of God. He found a resting-place in a cave in the mountain-side, and there God's voice called to him, "What doest thou here, Elijah?" Bitterly he tried to justify his flight. "I have been very zealous for Jehovah, the God of Hosts; for the men of Israel have forsaken Thy covenant, cast down Thine altars, and slain Thy prophets with the sword. I, I only, am left, and they seek my life to take it away." Again came the whisper from heaven, "Go out, and stand in the Mount before Jehovah."

Then the Eternal passed before His servant. A mighty wind shook the mountain and tumbled the rocks, but Jehovah was not in the wind; Sinai rocked and shuddered to an earthquake, but Jehovah was not in the earthquake; lightning flashed among the barren crags, but Jehovah was not in the lightning. Then silence, and a voice of gentle stillness. At that sound Elijah wrapped his cloak about his face and came to the mouth of the cave. Once

more the whisper came to him, "What doest thou here, Elijah?" The old excuse came to his lips again. "Back to thy duty," said the voice of God. "Go through the desert to Damascus, and anoint Hazael king over Syria, anoint Jehu, the son of Nimshi, to be king over Israel, and Elisha, the son of Shaphat, to be prophet after thee. And know thou that I have yet seven thousand left to Me in Israel, whose knees have not been bent to Baal, and whose mouths have not kissed him."

Elijah took his journey to the Meadow of the Dance where lay the home of the man who was to succeed him. As he came to the place, twelve pair of oxen were ploughing in the field, and with the last pair was Elisha. Elijah let the rest go by, and as the twelfth passed he threw his cloak across the shoulders of the ploughman. Elisha left the plough in the furrow and ran after his new master. "Let me but kiss my father and mother," he said, "and I will follow thee." "Return," Elijah answered, "what have I done unto thee?" But Elisha knew the meaning of the call. He sacrificed a pair of oxen, and gave their flesh as a farewell feast to his friends and companions. Then he followed Elijah, and became his servant and disciple.

(3) CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

THERE was war between Israel and the Syrians of Damascus, and Ben-hadad, King of Syria, gathered a mighty army and besieged Samaria. In the pride of his strength he counted the city already won, and bade King Ahab yield him the choice of all that was best in his palace, bragging that if the King of Israel did not submit, the dust of Samaria would not suffice to give a handful to each soldier of the Syrian host. Ahab answered him with scorn, "Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off;" and in the battle which followed, the Syrians, surprised in the midst of a drunken revel, were routed with a great slaughter. Again they came up to war with a host great as the former one, and again they met with

NABOTH'S VINEYARD.
(I Kings, xxi, 20–22.)

overthrow, so that Ben-hadad was driven to cast himself upon the mercy of his foe. Hastily and carelessly Ahab yielded to his plea, and there was peace between Israel and Syria for a season; but the King of Israel had spared an enemy who, in the end, was to be his undoing.

Now it fell out that Ahab cast envious eyes upon the vineyard of Naboth of Jezreel, which lay hard by the royal palace. At first he would fain have had it by fair means. "Give me thy vineyard," he said to Naboth, "that I may have it for a garden, because it is near my house. I will give thee a better vineyard in exchange; or, if it be good in thine eyes, I will pay thee the price of it in money." "Nay," answered Naboth, "it is the inheritance of my fathers. God forbid that I should give it to thee." Ahab was an angry man at that refusal. Sulking like a spoilt child, he flung into his house, and lay down on his bed, face to the wall, and would eat nothing. When his evil wife Jezebel heard the cause of his displeasure, she mocked at him. "Thou, a king in Israel! Rise and eat and be merry: I will give thee the vineyard of Naboth."

So the vile woman sent out letters, sealed with the royal seal, to the headmen of the city, bidding them charge Naboth with blasphemy and treason and hire false witnesses against him. Like queen, like people—the rulers of the city did her bidding, and the guiltless man was condemned and stoned to death. A message came to the queen that her evil will was done. "Rise," she said to her husband, "take possession of the vineyard which Naboth refused to give thee; for he is not alive, but dead."

Well pleased, Ahab went down to see the toy that had cost a good man's life; but there was one before him with whom he had not reckoned. As he drove his chariot to the vineyard, with Jehu and Bidkar, his captains, behind him, the grim figure of Elijah rose from among the vines, and Ahab recoiled. "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" he cried. "I have found thee," came the stern answer, "because thou hast sold thyself to work evil in the sight of Jehovah. So thy house shall be cut off to the last man, like the houses of the evil men that went before thee, Jeroboam and Baasha. And for that wife of thine, thus saith the Lord, 'The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the ditch of Jezreel. Whoso of

thine dieth in the city, the dogs shall eat him; and whoso dieth in the open country, the vultures shall eat him.'"

When he heard that doom, Ahab's heart was turned within him. He rent his royal robes, and clad himself in sackcloth, and fasted. God had mercy on the repentant sinner. "Seest thou," He said to Elijah, "how Ahab humbleth himself before Me? Because of his repentance, I will not bring the evil in his days; in the days of his son it shall come."

Yet, even so, blood would have blood, and Ahab was not to go down to his grave in peace. After three years the King planned to win back Ramoth in Gilead from the Syrians. Jehoshaphat, King of Judah, was in Samaria at the time, and Ahab craved his help. "Wilt thou go with me to battle against Ramoth-Gilead?" "Surely," said the King of Judah, "I as thou, my men as thy men, my horses as thy horses. Only let us first ask counsel of Jehovah." Four hundred false prophets were gathered before the kings, and with one voice they cried, "Go up to Ramoth; for Jehovah shall deliver it into the King's hand." But Jehoshaphat misdoubted him of their truth. "Is there not a prophet of Jehovah," he said, "that we might ask of him?" "One fellow indeed—" said Ahab, "Micaiah, the son of Imlah; but I hate him, for he never has aught to prophecy of me but evil." It may be that Jehoshaphat thought that all the surer proof of Micaiah's truth. The prophet was brought before the kings, as they sat in their royal robes before the gate of Samaria. At first he spake like the four hundred—"Go, and prosper;" but Ahab caught the ring of mockery in his tone, and bade him speak the bare truth. Solemnly he answered, "I saw all Israel scattered on the hills like shepherdless sheep; and Jehovah said, 'These have no master; let them return every man to his house in peace.'"

In great anger Ahab gave Micaiah to be kept in ward, and fed on bread and water; but the ill-omened words made him uneasy. "I will disguise myself," he said to Jehoshaphat, "and go into battle; but wear thou thy royal harness." Now the King of Syria had given command to the thirty-two captains of his chariot brigade: "Fight neither with small nor great, but only with the King of Israel." So when they saw Jehoshaphat in kingly armour,

all turned to fight with him. Jehoshaphat charged, shouting his war-cry, and they knew their mistake, and turned from him to seek their real foe. But doom was waiting for Ahab in other fashion. A bowman in the Syrian ranks let fly a random shaft, and it pierced the King of Israel between breastplate and shoulder-piece. "Turn," he said to his charioteer, "and take me out of the fight; for I am wounded."

Bad man though he was, Ahab was yet a good soldier. He bade them prop him up in his chariot to watch the battle, lest his host should be discouraged; and all day long he kept his dying watch, while the lifeblood drained from his wound and lay in a pool on the floor of the chariot. At sunset he died, and the cry went through the army, "Each man to his own city and his own land." They brought the dead king back in his blood-stained chariot to Samaria, and buried him. His chariot and his gory armour they washed in the pool of Samaria, and the wandering dogs of the town licked his blood, even as God had said by the mouth of Elijah,—"In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth, shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine."

For a short two years after Ahab's death, his son Ahaziah reigned in Samaria; and if Ahab was evil, Ahaziah was worse. Trouble came upon Israel from without, for Moab, the vassal of the Northern Kingdom, rebelled. Ere long trouble came upon the King himself, for he fell from a window of his palace, and was sorely injured. He sent his servants to Ekron to ask of the Baal of Ekron, "Baal of the Flies," whether he should recover. They were stopped in the way by a wild figure. "Is there no God in Israel," he said, "that ye go to inquire of the god of Ekron? Turn back, and say to Ahaziah, 'Thus saith Jehovah, "Thou shalt not rise from the bed on which thou art lain down, but shalt surely die."'" The strange figure vanished, and the messengers turned back, and tremblingly told the message to their master.

"What like was he who met you?" said Ahaziah, "Shaggy, and girt with a leathern girdle," they said. "Elijah the Tishbite!" he said, and knew himself doomed.

So Ahaziah died sonless, and his brother Jehoram reigned in his place, the last of the wicked house of Omri.

(4) THE PASSING OF ELIJAH

NOW the time drew near when Elijah's days on earth were to end. He set out with his servant Elisha, and went to Gilgal. "Bide here, I pray thee," he said to Elisha, "for the Lord sends me to Bethel." "By God's life and thine," said Elisha, "I will not leave thee." So they twain went together, first to Bethel, then to Jericho, and at either place Elijah would fain have left his servant; but ever Elisha refused. Both at Bethel and Jericho the young men who were training as prophets of the Lord warned Elisha, "Knowest thou that the Lord will take thy master from thee today?" "Silence," he answered, "I know it." Fifty of them took post to watch what should befall, and together the master and his disciple went out from Jericho, and came to the bank of Jordan.

Elijah wrapped his cloak together and smote the water with it; and lo! the river parted this way and that, and the two went over dry-shod. On the farther bank Elijah turned to Elisha. "What shall I do for thee?" he said. "Ask, before I be taken away from thee." Then said Elisha, "Give me the gift of the first-born,—a double share of thy spirit." "Thou hast asked a difficult thing," said Elijah. "Yet if thou seest me, as I am taken away from thee, it shall be so to thee; but if not, it shall not be so." For a while they went on talking together. Then suddenly there was the rush of a whirlwind about them, and a chariot and horses of fire parted them one from the other; and Elijah was gone from the earth. "My father, my father," cried Elisha, looking up to heaven, "the strength of Israel, her chariot and her horsemen!" At his feet lay the rough cloak that had fallen from his master's shoulders. Taking it up, he turned back to the bank of Jordan, and smote the waters, as Elijah had done. "Where is Jehovah, the God of Elijah?" he cried, and the waters parted on this side and on that.

The fifty young disciples who were watching saw what he had done. "Lo!" they said, "the spirit of Elijah rests upon Elisha."

Therefore they came to meet him and did him reverence. "See now," they said to him, "here be we, fifty strong men; let us go and seek thy master. Perchance the spirit of Jehovah has set him down on some mountain-top, or in some valley." "Ye shall not send to seek him," he said; but they urged him till he was ashamed to refuse. "Send, then," he said. For three days they sought among the hills and dales, but found not Elijah; nor was the great prophet ever seen on earth again, save once only, as shall be seen in its place.

So Elisha took up the work of his great master. The sons of the prophets came to him to be taught, and once and again he wrought wonders on their behalf. Moreover, he proved himself a strength to the land in time of need, for by his wise counsel the united hosts of Israel and Judah were saved from perishing by thirst in the wilderness, as they marched to war against Moab; so that his name grew famous in the land.

Now it fell out that in his journeyings the prophet often passed by the town of Shunem. There dwelt there a wealthy woman, and, as Elisha passed, she urged him to break bread in her house; and it grew to be a custom that, whenever he passed that way, he turned aside and ate in her house. One day she said to her husband, "Look, now, this is a holy man of God who passes our door continually. Let us make him a little room on the outer wall of the house, and furnish it with a bed and table, a stool and a lamp-stand; and whenever he comes this way he can rest there in quiet." So it was done, and the next time Elisha passed he found the room waiting for him, and used it, and was grateful for a kind thought.

He turned to Gehazi, his servant, "Call this Shunammite." "All this trouble thou hast taken for us," he said to her. "What can I do for thee? Wouldst thou have me speak for thee to the King, or the captain of the host?" "Nay," she replied, "I dwell among mine own people." "What, then, is to be done for her?" said Elisha, when she was gone forth. Gehazi had a suggestion. "She has no child, and her husband is old." "Call her," Elisha said again. She came and stood in the doorway of the little room. "Next year, about this time," said the prophet to her, "thou shalt be holding a son in thine arms." She could not believe it.

"Nay, my lord, a man of God like thyself,—do not lie unto thine handmaid!"

It fell out as Elisha had promised, nevertheless; and the next year a son was born to her. The days passed and the boy grew big and strong. One day in the blazing sunshine of the harvest-time he went out to his father, where he watched the reapers among the golden corn; and the fierce sunbeams smote him like a sword. "My head, my head!" he cried, and his father bade one of the young men carry him to his mother. They laid the little body on her knees, and there he lay till noon, and so died. She carried him up to the little room where he had been promised to her, laid him on Elisha's bed, shut the door upon him, and went out. Then she called to her husband, "Send me one of the young men, with one of the asses, that I may go to the man of God and return." "Why go today?" he said. "It is neither new moon nor Sabbath." But she had a thought in her mind that she could not tell him. "All shall be well," she said, and no more.

The ass was saddled, and she set out. "Forward," she said to the lad. "Slack not speed unless I bid thee." So they hastened on to where Elisha dwelt on the long slope of Carmel. He knew his kindly hostess from afar. "See," he cried to Gehazi, "yonder is our Shunammite. Run and meet her, and say, 'Is it well with thee? with thy husband? with thy child?'" She wasted no words on Gehazi. "It is well," she said, and pressing up the hill to Elisha, she fell down before him and clasped his feet. Gehazi would have thrust her away. "Let her alone," said Elisha, "for her soul is bitter within her, and God hath hidden the reason from me." She lifted her face from the dust and spake. "Did I ask a son of my lord? Did I not say, 'Do not deceive me?'" Elisha caught her meaning at once. "Gird thyself," he said to Gehazi. "Take my staff and go. Give no man greeting and if any greet thee, stay not to answer him; and lay my staff on the face of the child."

But the Shunammite had little faith in Gehazi. "By God's life and thine," she said, "I will not leave thee." So Elisha turned homewards with her, and ere long they met Gehazi returning with downcast looks. "The child is not awake," he said. Elisha

went into the little room, where the boy lay, white and cold, upon the bed. He shut the door and cried to Jehovah. He laid himself beside the little body, eyes to eyes, hands to hands; and the child's flesh grew warm. He rose and walked this way and that in the house, then turned again and laid himself by the child once more; and the boy sneezed seven times, and opened his eyes. He summoned Gehazi—"Call this Shunammite." And as she came at the word, "Take up thy son," he said. She came in, and fell on her knees, and bowed her face to the prophet's feet, wordless; then took up her son, and went forth.

(5) NAAMAN THE SYRIAN

NAAMAN, captain of the host of the King of Syria, was in high favour with his master, because by him God had given victory to Syria. He was a valiant man-at-arms also; but—he was a leper. It fell out that on one of their raids the Syrian troopers had carried off a little maid of Israel, and she was servant to Naaman's wife.. One day she was talking with her mistress. "Would to God," she said, "that my lord were with our prophet in Samaria! He would heal him of his leprosy." Her word came to Naaman's ears, and he told it to the King. "Well thought of," said the King. "Go, and I will give thee a letter to the King of Israel." So Naaman set out, bearing with him ten talents of silver, six thousand pieces of gold, and ten suits of raiment. He brought the letter to King Jehoram; and the writing of it was in this wise: "When this letter is come unto thee, behold, the bearer is Naaman my servant, whom I have sent that thou mayest heal him of his leprosy."

When Jehoram read that letter, he rent his garments. "Am I God," he cried, "to give death or life, that this man sends me a man to be cured of his leprosy? Look, now, how he would pick a quarrel with me!"

Elisha heard of the King's dismay, and sent a message to him. "Why hast thou rent thy clothes? Let the man come to me and

he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel." Naaman came to Elisha's door, with his chariot and horses, and the prophet sent out a message to him—"Go, dip seven times in Jordan, and thy flesh shall be whole again, and thou shalt be cleansed." Naaman flashed up in anger at the scant honour shown to so great a man. "Behold, I said to myself, he will surely come out to me, and call on the name of Jehovah, his God, and wave his hand over the place, and heal me. Abana and Pharpar, rivers of my own Damascus, are they not better than all the streams of Israel? May I not wash in them and be cleansed?" So he turned, and went away in a rage.

His servants were wiser. "My father," said one of them, "if the prophet had bid thee do a great thing, wouldst thou not have done it? How much rather, then, when he only says, 'Wash and be clean?'" Then Naaman went down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, as he was bidden, and his flesh was renewed, like the flesh of a little child, and he was cleansed.

He turned back to Elisha's door, with all his train, and called for the prophet. "Lo, now!" he said, "I know that in all the earth there is no God, save in Israel. Take an offering, I pray thee, from thy servant!" But Elisha answered, "By the life of God, whom I serve, I will take nothing;" and, though Naaman urged him, he still refused. The Syrian captain bethought him that he would rear an altar in Damascus to Jehovah of the sacred soil of Israel. "At least then," he said, "give thy servant two mule-loads of earth. For from henceforth I will offer no sacrifice to any other God, but to Jehovah alone. There is one thing—God pardon me in it—when my master the King goeth into the house of Rimmon, his god, he will lean on my arm, and I must needs bow myself as he boweth in the house of Rimmon. When I do this thing, God pardon me." "Go in peace," said Elisha.

Naaman had gone but a little way, when covetousness awoke in Gehazi's soul. He said to himself, "My master hath let this Syrian off too cheaply, taking nothing from him; but, by God's life, I will run after him and have something from him yet!" Naaman saw the runner following him, stopped his chariot, and came back to meet him. "Is all well?" he said. "All is well,"

the rogue answered. "My master hath sent me to tell thee, 'This moment two disciples of the prophets are come unto me from Mount Ephraim. Give them, I beg thee, a talent of silver and two suits of clothing.'" "Take two talents," said the generous Syrian. He urged them on the hypocrite, gave two talents and two suits of clothing to two of his servants, and bade them carry them to the prophet's house. When they were come to the house, Gehazi took their burden from them, and hid it in a secret place; and they turned back to their master.

Rid of his plunder, Gehazi came into Elisha's presence. "Whence comest thou, Gehazi?" said the man of God. Glib and quick came the lie, "Thy servant went no whither." Elisha's voice was stern. "Did not my spirit go with thee when that man turned from his chariot to meet thee? Is this a time to be taking money and garments, lands and flocks and slaves? The leprosy of Naaman shall cleave to thee and thy race for ever." And Gehazi went out from his master's presence, a leper as white as snow.

(6) "WINDOWS IN HEAVEN"

NCE more there was war between Israel and Syria, and the Syrians were so retroubled over the way in which, once and again, their plans and their ambuscades were brought to naught. For when the Syrian King planned an ambush in a place, someone ever warned the King of Israel, so that the trap was laid in vain. The King of Syria doubted that there must be traitors in his camp. "Which of you," he said, "is for the King of Israel?" "None of us, my lord King," answered one of his courtiers; "but Elisha, the prophet of Israel tells his king the very words that thou speakest in thy bedchamber." Elisha dwelt in Dothan, and when the King of Syria knew that he was there, he sent a strong company of horsemen and chariots, who came by night and surrounded the town. In the morning Elisha's servant went forth, and lo! the Syrian leaguer was spread around the walls. He came back to Elisha in despair. "Alas, master! How

shall we do?" "Fear not," said the man of God, "for on our side are more than on theirs." Then he prayed to Jehovah, "Lord, open his eyes, that he may see;" and in a moment the young man saw the hillside covered with fiery chariots and horses round about Elisha.

As the Syrian host came down the hill to enter the city, Elisha prayed to God again. "Smite this people, I pray thee, with blindness." Immediately there fell upon the Syrian soldiers a mist and a glamour, so that all things were changed to their eyes, and they knew not where they were. Elisha came forth to them. "This is not the way," he said, "nor this the city ye seek. Come ye after me and I will lead you to the man." They followed him like sheep, and he led them into the very midst of Samaria. Then he besought God to lift the glamour from their eyes; and when once more they saw clearly, lo! they were in the midst of their enemy's stronghold, ringed round with armed foes. "My father," cried King Jehoram, eagerly, "shall I smite them? Shall I smite them?" "Thou shalt not smite them," said Elisha. "Smite those whom thou hast taken captive with thine own sword and bow,—not these captives of Jehovah! Set food before them, and let them go home to their master." So it was done, and for a while that generous bit of chivalry put a stop to the Syrian raids on Israel.

But after a time Ben-hadad of Syria gathered a mighty power, and laid siege to Samaria. The city was hard pressed. The vilest food brought a great price, and so dire was the famine that women devoured their own children. When King Jehoram heard of that horror, he rent his garments, so that they that beheld him saw that he was wearing sackcloth upon his flesh beneath the royal robes; and he sware a great oath that he would have the head of Elisha, since the prophet had done naught to deliver the city. So he sent one of his guards to do his will, and he himself followed upon the soldier's heels.

Elisha sat in his house, speaking with the elders of the town; but God warned him in his spirit of the danger that was drawing near. "See," he said, "how this son of a murderer has sent to take away mine head! When the headsman cometh, bar the door, and keep him without. Hear ye not the sound of his master's feet behind him?"

The King was wroth at the failure of his plot. "All this evil," he cried, "comes from Jehovah. Why should I serve Jehovah any longer?" "Hear the word of Jehovah," answered Elisha. "Thus saith the Lord, 'Tomorrow about this time, a measure of fine flour shall be sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, in the gate of Samaria.'" One of Jehoram's courtiers, on whose hand the King leaned, laughed in the prophet's face. "If Jehovah could make windows in heaven, and pour down grain," he said, "this thing might be." "Behold," said Elisha, "thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not eat thereof."

That evening four lepers were sitting, as they were wont, at the gate of Samaria; and they talked together of their bitter case. "What use," said one, "to sit here till we die? If we go into the city, famine is there, and we die; if we sit here we die also. Come, let us go to the camp of the Syrians. If they save us, we shall live; and if they slay us,—well, they can do no more." To him the others agreed. "Better they might be; worse they could not be." So in the deepening twilight these four poor wretches marched boldly into the Syrian lines. There was not a man to be seen! God had made the Syrians hear a great noise, as of a marching host, the tramp of horses and the rattle of chariots. A whisper ran from rank to rank. "We are cut off! The King of Israel has hired the kings of the Hittites and of the Egyptians to fall upon us." Panic-terror ran through all the camp. Each man fled for his life through the deepening darkness. Behind them they left everything standing as it was, tents, horses,—nothing mattered, it was for life!

The four lepers wandered into the first tent they came to. Food and wine were spread on the table, and they ate and drank to their hearts' content; vessels of silver and gold, and costly garments were scattered around; they stripped the tent and hid their plunder in the earth. They came into another tent, bore out more spoil, and buried it with the rest. Then conscience woke. "We are not doing right," said one. "This is a day of good news, and we are keeping it to ourselves. If we wait till morning, harm will come of it. Come, let us tell it to the King's household."

They came and shouted to the warder of the city gate, "We

have been into the Syrian camp. There is no one there, nor sound of any one; nothing but horses and asses in the picket lines, and the tents left standing." The good news reached the King's ears at last. It seemed to him too good to be true. "The Syrians have laid a trap for us," he said. "They know we are starving. They have left the camp, and are lying in ambush. If we come out to plunder they will cut us off, and seize the city." "Anyhow," said one of the household, "we have five horses left. It can do no harm to send out riders to see." They sent out a couple of pair-horsed chariots. All the way from Samaria down to the banks of Jordan they followed on the track of that mad flight. It was easy to trace, for the whole way was strewn with garments, weapons, and costly vessels that the Syrians had thrown away to run the lighter.

The whole city streamed out to the deserted camp and pillaged it. The stores of the besieging army were sold in the gate of Samaria,—"a measure of fine flour for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel," even as God had said by Elisha. It chanced that the captain of the gate that day was the very lord who had jeered at Elisha's prophecy. In their eagerness for food, the starving people trampled him to death. And so God's word came true to the last letter. He saw the opening of the windows of heaven, but he ate not of God's bounty.

After these things it happened one day that King Jehoram was talking with Gehazi, who had once been servant to Elisha. "Tell me, I pray thee," he said, "the great things that Elisha hath done." And Gehazi told the story of the Shunammite's son, and how he was restored to life by the prophet. Now there had come trouble to the good woman of Shunem. She had gone into Philistia, by Elisha's advice, to escape a famine that had wasted the land for seven years; and on her return she found that her home and her fields had been seized. And so it happened that on this very day when Gehazi talked with Jehoram, she and her son came into the presence of the King to cry for justice. Gehazi knew her in a moment. "My lord King," he cried, "this is the woman, and this is her son, whom Elisha restored to life." When the King heard that, he bade the woman tell her story; and having heard it, he sent an officer with charge to see, not only that her land was

given back to her, but that she was paid for all that it had yielded during the years of her absence. And so even Gehazi proved himself not altogether evil.

Years before, at Sinai, the Mount of God, the Lord had bidden Elijah anoint Hazael to be king of Damascus, and Jehu to be king of Israel; but Elijah had passed away, with this part of his task still undone, and it fell to Elisha to fulfil Jehovah's command. He went to Damascus and word of his coming was carried to King Ben-hadad. Now the King was sick, and when he heard of the coming of the man of God, he sent to him his captain Hazael, with forty camels laden with all that was richest in Damascus. The Syrian soldier came before the Hebrew prophet and spoke the message—"Thy son, Ben-hadad, King of Syria, hath sent me to thee, saying, 'Shall I recover of this disease?'" Elisha answered him with a double meaning. "Say to thy master, 'Thou mayest certainly recover.' Nevertheless, Jehovah hath shewn me that he shall surely die."

As he gave this strange message, he looked so keenly upon Hazael that the soldier faltered and changed colour. Then the prophet wept. "Why weepeth my lord?" said Hazael. And Elisha answered, "Because I foresee the evil that thou wilt do to Israel. I see their towns blazing, their young men falling by the sword, their women and children slain!" "What!" cried Hazael. "Thy servant, this dog, to do so great things!" Solemnly Elisha answered him, "The Lord hath shewed me thee king over Syria."

Hazael came back to his master. "What said Elisha to thee?" said the sick King. "He told me that thou shouldest certainly recover." Next day Hazael took a thick cloth, soaked it in water, and held it over his master's face till the labouring breathing ceased. So Ben-hadad died, and Hazael reigned in his stead.

(7) A SAVAGE REFORMER

NOW was come the time for the ending of that wicked house of Omri and Ahab which had wrought so much evil in Israel. Jehoram, Ahab's son, still reigned over the land, with his mother Jezebel to inspire him to evil. Judah was now in alliance with the Northern Kingdom, for King Joram of Judah had wedded Athaliah, daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, a woman fierce and wicked as her mother, and when Joram died, his son Ahaziah, a weak and foolish king, maintained the friendship between the house of David and the evil race of the north.

On an ill day for them both, the kings of Israel and Judah went forth to war with Syria over the old bone of contention, Ramoth-Gilead; and Jehoram of Israel had little better fortune than his father Ahab, for in the fighting before the town he was wounded, and went back to Jezreel to be healed of his hurts. Ahaziah also left the camp, and went to Jezreel to visit his wounded ally.

Elisha called to him one of his young disciples. "Take this vial of oil," he said, "and hasten to Ramoth-Gilead, to the army. Seek out Jehu, the son of Nimshi; take him alone with thee into an inner chamber. Pour the oil upon his head and say to him, 'Thus saith Jehovah, "I have anointed thee king over Israel."' Then flee in haste, and tarry for no man."

The young man came to Ramoth, and found the captains of the host sitting together in council, Jehu in their midst. "I have an errand unto thee, O captain," he said. "To which of us?" said Jehu. "To thee, O captain." Jehu rose and followed the messenger into an inner room. The young man poured the oil upon the soldier's head. "Thus saith Jehovah, God of Israel," he said: "'I have anointed thee king over Israel. Thou shalt smite the house of thy master Ahab, that I may avenge all the blood of My servants shed by Jezebel. The whole house of Ahab shall perish. The dogs shall eat, Jezebel in the field of Jezreel, and there shall be none to bury her.'" So saying, he opened the door and fled.

Jehu came back to his comrades. "What had this madman to

EVANGELICAL
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

say to thee?" they asked. "Ye saw the man," he said, "and ye know the kind of thing he would say." "Nay, but tell us," they said. Jehu gave them the prophet's message, and rebellion rose full-armed in a moment. Each captain stripped off his soldier's cloak, and spread it on the landing of the outer stair for the newly anointed king to sit upon; they bade the trumpets blow, and shouted "Jehu reigneth."

The gates of the town were shut and barred, lest any messenger should carry a warning to King Jehoram at Jezreel; and Jehu mounted his chariot and set out to bear the news himself, with a company of the chariotry at his back. A watchman stood in the tower in the palace of Jezreel where Jehoram lay sick, and he cried, "I see a troop." Said Jehoram, "Send an horseman to meet them, and let him ask, 'Is it peace?'" The rider went forth, and as he met the hurrying chariots, he cried, "The King asks, 'Is it peace?'" "What business is that of thine?" said Jehu grimly. "Fall in behind me."

The outlook on the tower cried, "The rider came to them, but he comes not back." A second horseman was sent out. "Is it peace?" he cried. And again came the stern answer, "What business of thine? Fall in behind me." "He, too, has met them, and cometh not back," shouted the watchman, "and methinks the driving is like that of Jehu, son of Nimshi, for he driveth in mad haste." The King felt that there was danger in the wind. "Yoke," he cried; and he and Ahaziah of Judah, each in his chariot, drove forth to meet the fate that was rushing towards them. Strangely the two troops met in the field of Naboth with its bloody memories. "Is it peace, Jehu?" cried the doomed man, as the chariots swept towards one another. "What peace can there be," said the rebel, "while thy mother Jezebel fills the land with vileness and sorcery?"

Jehoram wheeled his horses round. "Treachery, Ahaziah!" he shouted, and drove for his life. But Jehu put all his strength to his bow, and the swift arrow struck the fleeing King between the shoulders, pierced his heart, and came out at his breast, and Jehoram sank down, a dead man, in his chariot. Jehu turned to Bidkar, who rode behind him. "Take him," he said, "and fling him into

the field of Naboth. Remember how I and thou rode behind his father Ahab, and God laid this doom on him,—'Yesterday I saw the blood of Naboth and of his sons; in this field will I requite thee.' Cast him into the field, as God said."

Ahaziah drove for dear life when he saw the fate of Jehoram; but there was no escape for him. "That man in the chariot," shouted Jehu, "smite him also!" The pursuers pressed hard behind him, and as his horses slackened speed on the hill towards Gur, one of the rebels got an arrow home. The stricken King fled to Megiddo, only to die there.

So much of his wild work done, Jehu drove to the palace gate at Jezreel to finish it. The fierce old Queen Jezebel knew that she was doomed. At least she would die as she had lived, fearing no man. She had faced even Elijah; she would face Jehu. As for some state ceremony she painted her eyelids, dressed her grey hair, and seated herself at the palace window. As Jehu drove his reeking horses through the archway into the courtyard, she flung a bitter taunt at him. "Salutation, O Zimri, murderer of thy master!" It stung, for Zimri, you may remember, reigned but one week after his slaying of King Elah; but Jehu wasted no words in answer. He looked up to the palace windows. "Who is on my side?" he shouted. Two or three eunuchs, base creatures of the palace, ready always to crawl before the man in power, made sign to him. "Throw her down!" he cried to them. Jezebel was flung from the high window, and dashed to the ground before the horses of the rebel King, her blood splashing them and the palace walls; and Jehu drove his chariot over the body.

He went into the palace and supped tranquilly after his bloody work. Over his wine he flung an order to his guard—"See to this accursed woman, and bury her. After all, she is a king's daughter." But lo! when they went forth, naught was left of her but a white skull and the bones of hands and feet. They returned and told their master; and the news sobered even his wild mood. "This," he said solemnly, "is what God foretold by His servant Elijah,—'In the field of Jezreel shall dogs eat the flesh of Jezebel. Her carcase shall be spread like filth upon the land in Jezreel, so that no man shall say, "This is Jezebel."'"

With slaughter Jehu began, and with slaughter he went on. Every man of the house of Ahab he caused to be slain. The heads of seventy princes were piled in two heaps before the gate of Jezreel, and the usurper flung a jibe across the ghastly heaps at the men who had worked his will.

Then came the turn of the worshippers and priests of Baal. Jehu snared them by guile. He sent out a proclamation—"Ahab served Baal a little; Jehu shall serve him much"—and bade all the priests and prophets and worshippers of the false Phœnician god to gather to a great sacrifice in his temple. From all ends of the kingdom they came, proud of the favour of the new King. All were gathered in the great temple, and, by the King's order, all were clad in festal garments, that there might be no mistake. Within the temple, the solemn sacrifice went forward. Around the doors Jehu posted eighty men of his guard. "I have put these men into your hands," he said to the soldiers. "If any escape—well—a life for a life!" When he had offered the royal sacrifice on Baal's altar, he came forth and gave the sign—"Go in, slay; let none come forth." So in the temple there was a dreadful slaughter, till the last priest and worshipper of Baal had fallen before the sword. The images of the god were shattered to fragments and burned, the temple itself dismantled and defiled.

So the worship of Baal was rooted out of the land by force and bloodshed, even as it had been set up. Yet, though Jehu claimed to be zealous for Jehovah, he was not zealous enough to cast down the golden calves in Dan and Bethel, but still clung to the evil policy of Jeroboam.

For eight and twenty troubled years he reigned. They were years of sore disaster for Israel. Fierce soldier as he was, he could not save his land from Hazael, the usurper of Damascus. The Syrians swept from him all the land of Gilead and Bashan, east of Jordan; and when he died it was a sorely diminished heritage that he left to his son Jehoahaz.

(8) THE ARROW OF THE LORD'S DELIVERANCE

JEHOAHAZ reigned for seventeen years, and his reign was one of bitter trouble and shame for the men of Israel. For Jehu's son forgot his father's zeal for Jehovah, such as it was, and not only worshipped the golden calves, but turned back to the vile worship of Astarte which Jezebel had brought with her in the old unhappy days of Ahab. Therefore the Lord loosed against Israel Hazael of Damascus and his son, and all the wild riders of Syria; and Hazael wrought upon the miserable Israelites all the horrors that Elisha had foreseen when he predicted his kingship. So low was the strength of Israel brought, that King Jehoahaz could muster for the field no more than fifty horsemen, ten chariots, and ten thousand infantry. The King went to his grave under the cloud of defeat, and his son Joash took up a tarnished sceptre, to rule over a broken people. But Joash, though he was no better a man than his father or Jehu, was a stout and skilful soldier; and in the sixteen years of his reign the tide of Syrian success began to ebb.

Now Elisha had fallen into extreme old age, and the time drew nigh when he should rest from his labours. So manifestly had he been the fence of Israel, that, as he lay on his bed in his last sickness, King Joash came down from his palace to visit the man who had done more for his country than all her kings and soldiers. The King, hard man though he was, wept over the dying prophet. "My father, my father," he cried, "more to Israel than chariots and horsemen!" The dying man raised himself upon his bed. "Take bow and arrows," he said; and Joash strung his bow, and laid an arrow on the string. Elisha laid his withered and shaking hands upon the hands of the King. "Open the window eastwards," he commanded, and then, "Shoot!" Joash drew the bow, and sent an arrow whistling forth. Elsha watched its flight. "The Arrow of the Lord's Deliverance," he said, "the arrow of deliverance from Syria. Thou shalt smite the Syrians in Aphek with a great slaughter."

Once more he bade the King shoot. "Strike it into the ground," he said. Three times Joash drove an arrow quivering into the earth outside the window; then stayed his hand. Angrily Elisha rebuked him. "Thou shouldst have shot five or six times, for then hadst thou brought the Syrians to utter destruction. Now thou shalt beat them only thrice."

So Elisha went to his grave more eager to the last for the honour of his land than its King, as he had ever been. After his death his dying word came to pass, for Joash defeated Ben-hadad, the son of Hazael of Syria, in three battles, and won back again for Israel the lost land east of Jordan. Moreover he broke the pride of the Kingdom of Judah with a sore blow. For when Amaziah of Judah, proud of his conquest of Edom, challenged him to battle, Joash routed him at Beth-shemesh, and took him prisoner. Marching on Jerusalem, he made a breach of four hundred cubits length in the walls, looted the Temple and the royal treasuries, and carried off his spoil in triumph, leaving Judah broken and ashamed. And after he was dead, his son, Jeroboam the Second, ruled with a strong hand, gaining great success in war, and giving to Israel one last gleam of prosperity before the long night closed down upon the Northern Kingdom.

(9) THE KINGDOM FALLS

FOR forty-one years Jeroboam, the son of Jehoahaz, reigned in Samaria, and though he still clung to the sin that his first namesake had sown in Israel, and worshipped the golden calves, yet in his days the Lord had mercy upon His people for a season, and gave them deliverance from their enemies. For Jeroboam proved a mighty soldier, who captured Damascus and carried the frontier of Israel even to Hamath, far in the north by the river Orontes. But with conquest and prosperity came luxury and vice and oppression. The great men of the land grew slothful and self-indulgent, and the poor were trodden down, so that the cry of their misery went up to Heaven.

Therefore God raised up His servant Amos to bear witness against the pride and hardness of heart of the rulers of Israel. Amos was a man of Tekoa in Judah, humble and unlettered, a simple herdsman and gatherer of sycamore fruit, but just and fearless, with a fire of anger in his heart against all cruelty and injustice. He came to the great sanctuary at Bethel, and sternly denounced doom upon the merciless oppressors of the poor. "Woe," he cried, "to them that are at ease in Zion, and trust in the mountain of Samaria . . . that lie upon couches of ivory, that sing to the sound of the viol, that drink wine in bowls; but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph . . . that sell the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes. Therefore," he said, "shall they go captive with the first that go captive."

Amaziah, the High Priest of Bethel, heard of the daring words of the Jewish herdsman, and came in great anger to crush the presumptuous prophet under his official dignity. "Away, thou seer," he cried, "flee into the land of Judah, and eat thy bread, and prophesy there. In Bethel thou shalt not prophesy any more; for it is the royal sanctuary and the house of this kingdom." Amos met the pride of officialdom with a higher pride. "I was no prophet, nor prophet's son," he answered, "only a herdsman and a gatherer of sycamore fruit; but God called me and bade me prophesy to the house of Israel." And then he foretold a dreadful doom for the man who spoke as God's priest, yet did not God's will—the shame and slaughter of his family, and his own death in a heathen land.

Yet the message of Amos was not all of judgment and destruction. He foresaw the time when Jehovah would have mercy upon his people and would restore them—a time when the land should overflow with abundance, and the people dwell in peace. "'I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be plucked up out of their land which I have given them,' saith Jehovah thy God."

After Jeroboam's death, the end that Amos had foreseen came apace. The great King's son, Zachariah, reigned but for six months when Shallum slew him and seized the throne. The murderer's time was short, for in a month a new pretender, Menahem, the son

of Gadi, came up from Tirzah, slew Shallum, and wore the blood-stained crown for ten shameful years. In his days the giant power of Assyria, under the great soldier Pul, or Tiglath-Pileser, threatened invasion, and Menahem was forced to buy off an enemy he could not resist by the payment of a thousand talents of silver.

For two years after the death of Menahem, his son Pekahiah held the throne; then Pekah, one of his captains, gathered a band of Gileadite ruffians, murdered him in his palace, and reigned in his stead. His twenty years of sovereignty were years of disaster for Israel; for Tiglath-Pileser of Assyria swept down upon the northern and eastern part of the kingdom, and drove all the men of Gilead and Galilee into exile in Assyria. The disgrace of that overthrow sealed Pekah's fate. He went the way of unsuccessful eastern kings, and was murdered by Hoshea, son of Elah, who was destined to be the last of the kings of Israel.

For six years Hoshea reigned as tributary of the Assyrian Empire. Then in madness he tried to league himself against his overlord with the Ethiopian Pharaoh who was reigning in Egypt, and refused to send his annual tribute to Nineveh. His folly brought the cruel Assyrian hosts upon the land. For three long years Samaria maintained a stubborn and desperate defence. Then the new Assyrian King, the mighty Sargon, captured the city, and swept all the northern tribes away into captivity in a strange land. So ended the kingdom that Jeroboam had reared upon the wreck of the kingdom of David.

As was their wont, the Assyrians sent new colonists into the land to fill the place of the ten tribes—strangers and heathen from the north and east—men of Babylon and Cuthah, Ava and Hamath and Sepharvaim. The land had gone back to wilderness in the years of war and desolation; wild beasts were rife, and some of the colonists were slain by lions. The strangers set down their misfortunes to the anger of the God of the land against men who knew not how to worship Him, and besought the Assyrian King to send them someone who would teach them how to worship Jehovah. An Israelite priest was sent back from exile; and he dwelt in Bethel, and taught them what he knew of the ancient worship of Israel. And so a strange mongrel religion grew up in the land; for

the colonists worshipped Jehovah for fear of the lions, and worshipped their own false god for love. "They feared the Lord, and served their own gods." And from them, with their mixed race and their mongrel religion, came in the after days that race of the Samaritans, between whom and the Jews there had grown to be such bitter hatred by the time of our Lord.

(*b*) The Kingdom of Judah

(1) A TIME OF SMALL THINGS

OW we must turn back for a little, to pick up the threads of the history of the house of David which reigned still in Jerusalem after the revolt of the ten tribes, and the history of the two tribes which remained faithful,—Judah and Benjamin.

When Rehoboam's folly had lost him the greater part of his kingdom, and when he had been forbidden to make war upon the rebel tribes, the King set himself to strengthen the fragment of his father's inheritance that still remained to him. All around the frontiers of his little kingdom he built strongholds, and set guards in them with great store of provisions and of munitions of war. For four years it seemed that he would prosper, for the land waxed stronger and stronger year by year under his care. But as his strength grew, so there grew again the pride of heart that had been his undoing in the beginning; and he forsook the way of Jehovah.

And in his fifth year all his work was undone. For Shishak, the Libyan Pharaoh of Egypt, came up against him with a mighty power—twelve hundred chariots, and sixty thousand horsemen, and foot-soldiers without number. All Rehoboam's strongholds were captured, and the Egyptian host laid siege to Jerusalem. Naught was left but to make terms with Shishak, lest the town should be stormed and put to fire and sword. All the treasures that David and Solomon had gathered with such care and pains for the House of Jehovah were swept away to buy off the invader;

the royal palace was stripped of all its splendours; the golden shields that once were borne by Solomon's body-guard went to grace the triumph of Egypt. Rehoboam caused shields of brass to be made in their stead for the guard; and perhaps brass for gold was no bad emblem of his reign as compared with that of his great father. Twelve years more he reigned in Jerusalem; then he died and his son Abijah came to the throne in his room. His reign lasted but three years; but he smote Jeroboam and the Northern Kingdom with a great slaughter at Mount Zemaraim, so that for ten years his son Asa had peace and waxed strong. Indeed he needed all his strength, for once again the army of Egypt came up against Judah under the Ethiopian Pharaoh, Zerah. At Mareshah in the valley of Zephathah the two hosts met in battle-array, and Jehovah gave victory to His people over the vast multitude that opposed them. Great was the spoil that the men of Judah bore back with them to Jerusalem; and in their triumph their hearts turned again to the God of their fathers. The idols that defiled the land were cast out, nor did King Asa spare even his own kindred in his zeal for Jehovah. Because his mother Maachah was given to idolatry, he deposed her from her royal place as queen-mother, and burned her idol at the brook Kidron. Yet the reign that had begun so well ended amidst clouds of misfortune. War abroad and sickness at home darkened Asa's latter days and soured his spirit, so that he grew suspicious and tyrannous. Yet when he died after a reign of forty-one years, his people forgot the evil days, and, remembering only his glory and his great triumph over Egypt, they mourned for him with a great mourning.

Of Jehoshaphat, the son of Asa, who reigned after him in Jerusalem, you have already heard in the story of Ahab—how he allied himself with that evil king, and almost paid for his folly with his life in the battle of Ramoth-Gilead. But this was the one blot upon a reign of piety and prosperity. For Jehoshaphat showed himself to be a true servant of Jehovah whose name he bore,—a man who cared for judgment and justice in his land, and gave himself to the service of the Lord. So it came to pass that in his hour of need Jehovah stood by him and saved him with a great deliverance.

It fell out in this wise. A great host of the wild Arab tribes from east of the Jordan, Moab, Ammon, and the men of Mount Seir, raided the land. So terrible was their onslaught that, ere he went forth to battle with them, King Jehoshaphat proclaimed a fast through all the land, and himself prayed to the Lord before all the people in the court of the Temple. And when his prayer was ended there stood forth a Levite, Jahaziel, the son of Zechariah, and in the name of God he bade the men of Judah be of good courage, for that Jehovah would fight this battle for them. "Ye shall not need to fight," he said. "Stand ye still and see the salvation of the Lord with you, O Judah and Jerusalem." At that promise the King and all the people bowed themselves to the ground and worshipped; and the host of Judah went forth with psalms of praise to meet their enemy.

As the Levite had foretold, so it came to pass. In the motley host of Arabs, there was mutual distrust and suspicion, and when some of their men were ambushed and cut off on the march by other desert tribes, their distrust blazed forth in open conflict. Each tribe turned its swords and spears against its neighbour, till the whole great army was broken and scattered with a mighty slaughter. By the time that Jehoshaphat and his men came upon the field, there was none left to fight with; but for three days the men of Judah gathered jewels and gold and costly war-harness from the dead marauders, and then returned to Jerusalem, as they had gone forth, with the sound of solemn music and the voice of praise.

So Jehoshaphat's reign was righteous and splendid. Only in one point did he fail; and that was where, untaught by experience, he joined himself in alliance with Ahaziah, the son of Ahab. For they two built a fleet of deep-sea ships on the Red Sea at Ezion-geber, and sent them forth to bring gold from Ophir as Solomon's fleet had done. But, whether by storm, or for lack of cunning mariners, the ships were cast away ere they were well clear of the harbour. There came a prophet to King Jehoshaphat, and bade him learn the lesson of the wreck,—"Because thou hast joined thyself with Ahaziah, the Lord hath broken thy works." So, when Ahaziah would fain have tried the fortune of the sea a second time,

Jehoshaphat refused to have more to do with the ill-starred adventure.

Yet the alliance with the blood-stained house of Omri was still maintained, and Jehoram, son of Jehoshaphat, was wedded to Athaliah, daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, and worthy of her parents. Jehoram reigned but for eight years, and his son, Ahaziah, after a single year of rule, perished, as you have heard already, in the slaughter with which Jehu destroyed Jehoram of Israel and all his kin. The death of her son roused in Athaliah's heart all the fierce ambition of her mother Jezebel. At once she seized the throne, and secured herself by a ruthless massacre of all the princes of the blood-royal. Then for six years she ruled the land, deeming that none was left who had the right to challenge her in her tyranny. But therein she was mistaken, and the mistake cost her her throne and her life, as you shall hear.

(2) THE BOY-KING OF JUDAH

NOW when Athaliah slew all the princes of the blood-royal and seized the throne, there was one brave woman in Judah who dared to do that which in the end brought all the wicked queen's plans to naught. Her name was Jehosheba, sister to King Ahaziah, and she was wedded to Jehoiada, the High Priest of Jehovah. She took Joash, the baby son of her dead brother, and kept him and his nurse in safe hiding during all the six years of Athaliah's reign. As time went on, Jehoiada the priest took counsel with a handful of brave men who were still faithful to the house of David, and they vowed to set the rightful heir upon the throne again, and to wipe out the false worship of Baal that Athaliah had set up in the land.

When the young prince was seven years old, they judged that the time was come to carry out their plan. From all parts of Judah the Levites were gathered together, as if for a great festival in the Temple, and Jehoiada told them of his plan, showed the young prince to them, and swore them to allegiance. He armed

them with the weapons of David's mighty men, which hung in the Temple, and divided them into three bands, to keep the Temple, the Palace, and the gates. Then on a Sabbath day he brought forth the boy-king, through ranks of armed men, into the Temple; and there he crowned and anointed him; and all the people shouted, "God save the King!"

At the sound of their shout, Athaliah hastened into the Temple to see what this tumult might mean. She found herself in the midst of enemies. There stood the young King, crowned and anointed, the High Priest and all the princes of the land by his side. All around were crowds of armed men, the trumpets blaring and the great multitude shouting for joy. In despair she rent her robes, and cried, "Treason! Treason!" Jehoiada stepped forward, and gave command to the captains of the guard. "Take her forth out of the Temple," he said, "that her blood may not defile the House of Jehovah. If any man stands by her, slay him with the sword." So the queen was led beyond the sacred precincts to the horsemen's gate of the King's palace; and there, like her mother, she met a bloody death.

King Joash was set upon the throne of his fathers, and all the nation swore fealty to him; and great was the rejoicing when the shadow of the wicked queen passed from the land. For forty years the King reigned, and, so long as the good and wise priest Jehoiada lived to be his counsellor, he walked in the ways of God and was faithful. The worship of Baal was abolished, his temple destroyed, his high priest, Mattan, slain before the altar. Joash himself was foremost in zeal for the service of Jehovah, and urged on the priests and Levites to restore the Temple to all its former splendour. At last, in a good old age, Jehoiada died, and was buried with great honour among the kings of Judah, because of all his faithfulness to God and to the royal house. And when he had gone to his rest, things went badly. The hearts of the nobles turned to the vile worship of Astarte, and the King was carried away in their apostacy. One brave witness for Jehovah stood forth, Zechariah, the son of the good High Priest Jehoiada. But when he rebuked the King and people for their faithlessness, Joash bade stone him to death in the very Temple court.

So the King forgot all that he owed to the man who had set him on the throne, and his ingratitude proved his destruction. As Zechariah breathed his last under the hail of stones, he said, "The Lord look upon it and requite it." So it came to pass, and God brought judgment upon the faithless King and nation. For Hazael of Damascus came against Judah, with the might of Syria, routed the Jewish army, and was only bought off by the surrender of all the Temple treasure. Joash was left a broken man, sick and unpopular, dogged by the memory of his great crime. Ere long some of the palace servants plotted against him, and murdered him as he lay in his bed. He was buried in Jerusalem, but not in the tombs of the kings. So, as always, guilt brought its own punishment, and a bright beginning had a dark ending.

(3) THE LEPER KING

MAZIAH, the son of the murdered Joash, sat on his father's throne, and took vengeance upon the murderers. For a time all went well with him. With a great army he marched against the land of Edom, smote the Edomites with a great and cruel slaughter, and captured their marvellous rock-hewn fastness of Petra. In triumph he brought back the idols of Edom captive to Jerusalem, but they proved a snare to him, for his heart turned to their worship, and God left him to the devices of his own foolish heart.

In his pride at his victory, he challenged Joash of Israel to battle. "Come," he said, "let us look one another in the face." Joash sent him an answer of bitter scorn. "The thistle that was in Lebanon," he said, "sent to the cedar that was in Lebanon, saying, 'Give thy daughter in marriage to my son;' and there passed by a wild beast that was in Lebanon, and trod down the thistle. Because thou hast smitten the Edomites, thine heart is lifted up to boast; content thee and stay at home. Why dost thou meddle to thy hurt, to fall, thou and Judah with thee?" It was wise advice, but too sour to be pleasant. Amaziah would not listen. He went forth to battle, and Joash, as you have heard

already, beat him, captured him, and shamed Jerusalem by breaking down its walls and looting its treasures. Amaziah reigned on for a time, a humiliated man; then he, too, went the way of his father. Treason arose against him in Jerusalem, and when he fled for his life to Lachish, the rebels followed him and slew him there.

Indeed it seemed as though an evil fate rested upon the kings of the house of David, so that none of them, no matter how well he might begin his reign, was able to endure, in wisdom and success, to the end. Amaziah was succeeded by his son Uzziah, a sixteen-year-old boy, who reigned for fifty-two long years. At first he gave himself to good counsellors, and walked in the ways of God; and it was well with him. Abroad he was victorious over all his foes, the Philistines of the sea plain, and the wild Arab tribes on the east of Jordan. At home he prospered exceedingly, for he was wise to see that the wealth of a land must lie in the industry of its people, and he was diligent in fostering the rearing of cattle, and all the toil of the farmer and vine-dresser. Jerusalem he made into a strong fortress, crowned with towers, and furnished with great war engines for casting stones and darts. Far and wide among the nations spread the fame of the wise King of Judah; "for he was marvellously helped till he was strong."

But success brought pride in its train, and pride brought disaster. The King's heart was uplifted with his glory, so that he would fain have made himself priest as well as king. With a censer in his hand he thrust himself presumptuously into the Holy Place to burn incense on the golden altar. Azariah the High Priest, and fourscore stout-hearted priests with him, were minded to withstand even so great a king and hold him back from sacrilege. "Only to the sons of Aaron," they said, "doth it belong to burn incense. Go out of the sanctuary; for thou hast trespassed, nor shall this be for thine honour." Furious at their opposition, the King stood by the altar, censer in hand; and even as he raged, the white spots of leprosy rose up on his brow, and all men saw that Jehovah had set His own bound to the royal presumption. At once the priests laid hands on Uzziah to thrust him out of the Holy Place; but it needed not their force. He himself felt the hand of God upon him, and made haste to get him gone.

So came all his greatness and wisdom to a miserable end through pride. A leper he remained to the day of his death, dwelling alone, as lepers dwell, in a separate house, all his glory gone from him, and Jotham, his son, acting as regent in his place. It was in the year of his death, so much glory ending in so deep a gloom, that the great prophet Isaiah had that first vision of God upon His throne that sent him forth to teach and lead His people.

For sixteen years after his father's death Jotham reigned well and wisely, carrying on Uzziah's work without Uzziah's pride, and prospering both in war and in peace. Then he, too, went to his rest, and his son Ahaz, a weak and foolish creature, ruled in his stead over Judah. All that had been evil in the ways of the northern kings of Ahab's wicked house, he imitated and overshot; for he burned incense to false gods in the valley of Hinnom, outside the walls of Jerusalem, and burned his own children on the altar of the fire-god, Moloch, and wrought all manner of abominable wickedness. Therefore God sent against him King Rezin of Damascus, and King Pekah of Samaria, who shamed and overthrew him. Even the men of Edom and Philistia, vassals to his father and his grandfather, turned upon him and raided his borders.

In the day of his distress there came to him Isaiah the prophet, bidding him return to Jehovah and put his trust in the God of his fathers; but Ahaz would not listen. Instead he plundered the House of God of its treasures that he might buy the help of Tiglath-Pileser, King of Assyria, against his enemies; and this he did to his own loss, for though the Assyrian captured Damascus and slew Rezin and cut Israel short, yet he was no help to Ahaz, who became no better than his vassal. And when his sixteen years of folly and disaster were ended by his death, his people showed their thought of him. There was no place among the kings of his line for the man who had brought shame upon Judah.

(4) THE CHALLENGE OF ASSYRIA

SPITE of the wickedness of Ahaz, the light of Judah was not yet to be put out. His son Hezekiah was a good man, reverent, prudent, zealous for the cause of God; and where he lacked strength, he had as his helper and counsellor a man so great and so brave that few lands or times have ever known his like,—Isaiah, the son of Amoz, the prophet of Jehovah.

Hezekiah lost no time in shewing that he was on the Lord's side. In the very first month of the first year of his reign he opened again the doors of the Temple that his father had shut, and cleansed the House from all its pollution, and ordered the worship of the sanctuary in seemly fashion, as in the days of old. In his zeal for the honour of God and his desire to see all the land united in the service of Jehovah, he even sent messengers to the broken fragments of the northern tribes, bidding them return to the House of God; and though many mocked at his summons, yet there were some who returned to the true worship, and sought once more the God of their fathers whom they had forsaken.

So Hezekiah brought back for a season the golden days of the early kingdom, and, giving himself with all his heart to the work of God, he prospered. But now there came upon him and his people a great and terrible danger. Sargon, the mighty King of Assyria, who had swept away the northern tribes into captivity, was dead; but his son Sennacherib came up with a great host, in the fourteenth year of Hezekiah's reign, and captured many of the fenced cities of Judah. Hezekiah, in his distress, made submission, and sent his tribute to the Assyrian King, as he was laying siege to Lachish. Sennacherib took the tribute, three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold; but, even so, he was not content with Hezekiah's submission. When he had captured Lachish, he passed on with his main army to war with the power of Egypt; but he sent a great host, under Tartan, his chief captain, and Rabsaris, his chief eunuch, and Rabshakeh, his chief cup-bearer, to demand the surrender of Jerusalem.

The men of Judah gathered in fear and trembling on the walls to see the might of Assyria encompassing their city; and Rab-shakeh stood forth and spake to them in the Hebrew speech. "Put not thy trust in Pharaoh, King of Egypt," he shouted, "a broken reed, whereon, if a man lean it will go into his hand and pierce him; neither put your trust in Hezekiah, King of Judah, for he shall not be able to deliver you. Make treaty with my master, the King of Assyria, and pay tribute. Then shall every man eat of his own vine and fig-tree, and drink of his own well, until I take you away into a land like your own, a land of corn-fields and vineyards."

When they heard these words, the hearts of the people were shaken, like corn in the wind. In his distress King Hezekiah sent messengers to Isaiah the prophet, to seek his counsel; and Isaiah bade the King be brave and fearless, for that the Lord would deal with the man who had blasphemed His name. Once more Rab-shakeh returned, bearing an insolent letter from Sennacherib to Hezekiah. "Let not thy God in whom thou trustest deceive thee," it said. "Have the gods of the nations delivered them whom my fathers destroyed? Where is the King of Hamath, and the King of Arpad, and the King of Sepharvaim, of Hena, and of Ivah?"

Then Hezekiah went into the House of God, and spread the letter of the proud Assyrian before Jehovah. "Indeed," so he prayed unto the Lord, "the kings of Assyria have destroyed the nations and their lands, and have cast their gods into the fire. For they were no gods, but wood and stone, the work of men's hands. But thou, O Lord, save us out of this man's hand, that all the kingdoms may know that Thou, Thou only, art the Lord God." And the Lord heard the King's prayer. He sent forth Isaiah to bid Hezekiah take courage, and the prophet answered the challenge of Assyria with the challenge of Jehovah. "The virgin, the daughter of Zion hath despised thee, and laughed thee to scorn," he said. "The daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee. Whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed? Even the Holy One of Israel. Therefore I will put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest."

As Isaiah had spoken, so it came to pass. For that night, as the King of Assyria lay in his camp in the south, ready to war with Taharqa of Egypt, there fell upon his host a dire pestilence; and in the morning an hundred and eighty-five thousand men lay dead.

In shame and great fear Sennacherib fled homewards, and recalled the army that lay around the walls of Jerusalem. So the Holy City was saved by the hand of God. And, long years afterwards, judgment fell upon the man himself who had matched his might with the Almighty; for his own sons, Adrammelech and Sharezer, slew him even while he was worshipping in the temple of Nisroch, his god. The assassins fled to the mountains, and Esarhaddon reigned in Sennacherib's stead.

Now after his triumph over Assyria, sore sickness fell upon King Hezekiah, and God sent Isaiah to warn him that his death drew nigh. The King's heart was sore to think that he must leave his work but half done, and with bitter tears he besought the Lord to spare him yet awhile. Then came Isaiah once more, and told the King that God had heard his prayer, and that fifteen years of life would yet be granted unto him. "What is the sign," said Hezekiah, "that I shall go up to the House of the Lord?" "Behold," answered the prophet, "the shadow shall turn back ten degrees on the sundial of King Ahaz." So it came to pass; and the King recovered of his sickness.

But in his joy he fell into a great folly. For Merodach-baladan, the usurping King of Babylon, sent an embassy to him under cover of the desire to congratulate him on his recovery, but really to spy out his land and his riches and strength. Hezekiah was filled with pride that the King of so great a city and people should so take notice of him; and he shewed to the men from Babylon all his riches and his munitions of war, hiding nothing from them. Once again Isaiah came to him, but this time not to comfort, but to rebuke. "Thou hast shewn these men from Babylon all that is in thine house," he said. "Behold, the days come when all thy treasure, and the treasure that thy fathers laid up shall be carried away to the same Babylon, and nothing shall be left. Thy sons also they shall carry away, and they shall be slaves of the harem in the palace of the King of Babylon."

THE CROWNING OF JOASH.
(II Kings, xi, 12.)

Hezekiah owned his folly, and strove to comfort himself with the thought that there would be peace in his day at least. Yet Isaiah's word came true in the end.

(5) THE LAST GLEAM

HEN King Hezekiah had gone to his grave, loved and honoured by all his people, his son Manasseh held the throne and reigned for fifty-five years. The earlier years of his reign were years of evil; for he gave himself to false worship, and to witchcraft, and to all manner of cruel superstition, and he shed much innocent blood in Jerusalem, persecuting those who still held by the faith of their fathers. In his days it is said that Isaiah, the greatest and wisest man in Judah, died a cruel death, being sawn asunder because of his faithfulness to Jehovah.

Swift judgment came upon the apostate king. Esar-haddon, the great Assyrian warrior King, invaded the land, captured Manasseh, and took him away in chains to Babylon. There misfortune led the captive king to God, as pride had led him away. In his house of exile he confessed his sin, and besought the mercy of Jehovah; and the Lord heard him, and brought him back to his kingdom in freedom,—a changed man. Thereafter he served the God of his fathers, and grew strong, and strengthened his kingdom; so that his latter days were good.

Yet he could not undo the evil he had wrought; and when his son Amon came to the throne he followed the example of his father's early days rather than that of his later ones. For two years his people bore with his wickedness; then he was slain, and his son Josiah was made king in his place.

Josiah was but a boy of eight years when he came to the throne, but his thirty years of rule were among the best that Judah ever knew,—a last gleam of light before the darkness fell. Ere he had come to manhood he showed his zeal for the truth and the true worship of God. He cleansed the land from end to end of all the false gods that defiled it. At Jerusalem he overthrew the image

of Moloch, the fire-god, devourer of little children, that stood in the valley of Hinnom. He burned the chariot of the sun-god and took away its horses. All the altars that had been reared to heathen gods in the wicked days of Ahaz and Manasseh, he beat to dust, and cast the rubbish into the brook Kidron.

Passing northwards he came to Bethel, the ancient seat of that worship of the golden calves wherewith Jeroboam brought sin upon Israel. There he brake down the altar and stamped the stones of it small, and burned the sacred poles that stood around it. Casting his eyes around for something wherewith to defile the place, that no man henceforth should count it holy, he spied some tombs close at hand and bade bring the bones of the dead from them and burn them where the altar had stood. Over one of the tombs there was a pillar graven with writing. "Whose memorial is that?" he asked. The men of Bethel answered him, "It is the tomb of the man of God which came from Judah and proclaimed those things which thou hast done against the altar of Bethel." "Let him alone," said the King. "Let no man move his bones." So the long-dead prophet of Judah, and the prophet of Israel who had trapped him to his doom, were left to their long sleep side by side.

After cleansing, came restoration. The Temple of God had been neglected for many a day, and was in evil case, its walls broken, its treasuries plundered. Therefore in the eighteenth year of his reign the King gave commandment that the House of Jehovah should be restored, and the work was set in hand. Now while Hilkiah the priest was searching one of the treasure-chambers of the Temple, he found an ancient roll, and brought it to Shaphan the scribe. It was the roll whereon was written that part of the Law of Moses which we call Deuteronomy. They bore it to the King, and read it in his hearing; and when he heard it, Josiah rent his clothes, seeing how far Judah had wandered from the truth, and how ill the commandments of the Lord, as touching His worship, had been kept.

He summoned a great gathering of the people, and caused the book to be read to them. Then, standing forth before them, he renewed the ancient covenant of the nation with Jehovah, and

caused them all to swear to it. And the covenant was followed by a Passover Feast such as had not been known in the land since the days of Samuel.

It was well done and wisely. But the time left to God's people for repentance and amendment was all too short, and the end drew near.

(6) THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF DAVID

OU must know that by this time Assyria, the great robber kingdom, the terror of all the nations, had fallen. Medes and Babylonians had joined in alliance against her, and Nineveh, her mighty capital, had been destroyed. The whole world rejoiced at her fall; and Nahum, the Elkoshite, sang of their gladness in words of fierce exultation—"All that hear the noise of thee shall clap their hands over thee; for upon whom hath not thy wickedness passed continually."

The allies divided between them the great Assyrian Empire; but the vassals of Nineveh were not all minded to pass tamely under the new yoke. First to shake it off was the famous Pharaoh of Egypt, Necho. With a great army he came up along the old war road of the nations till he reached the gateway to the Plain of Esdraelon; and there he met with opposition. Whether it was that King Josiah held that he must be loyal to his alliance with the successors of the northern power, or whether he dreaded a new master in the King of Egypt, he and his little army barred the pass at Megiddo. Necho had no wish to fight a needless battle. He sent his heralds to the Jewish King. "What have I to do with thee, thou King of Judah? I have not come to war against thee, but against mine own enemy. God has bidden me make haste. Forbear from meddling with God, who is with me, that He destroy thee not." But Josiah would not listen. The battle was joined, and the Jewish army scattered before the southern hosts. Josiah himself was mortally wounded by an arrow from an Egyptian bow. They laid him in his spare chariot, and brought him back

to Jerusalem; and there the last hope of Judah died in the prime of his manhood.

Great was the mourning over the good King, untimely cut off. Never had the nation been so moved, so that it became a proverb in the land for any great lamentation,—"a mourning like the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddo," where Josiah fell. But the prophet Jeremiah, who loved and honoured the King, bade them cease their grief. Soon, he said, they would have bitterer cause for weeping. "Weep ye not for the dead, neither bemoan him, but weep ye sore for him that goeth away: for he shall return no more, nor see his native country."

What he meant, the men of Judah had cause to know ere long. Jehoahaz, younger son of the dead King, was crowned in his room; but in three months Necho came back from his northern campaign, deposed the young King, and carried him captive into Egypt, never to see Judah or Jerusalem again. Something of good there must have been in this young prince whose reign was so soon cut short; for both Jeremiah and Ezekiel mourned his fate. You will find Ezekiel's beautiful lament in the ninteenth chapter of his prophecy, where he bewails the fate of the young lion of Judah, snared and carried away into Egypt.

In place of Jehoahaz, Necho made his brother Jehoiakim king; and for eleven years Jehoiakim held a precarious sovereignty. Hanging on the edge of doom, he yet found the will and the means to do evil; for he set up again all the abominations of idolatry that his father Josiah had cast down; and he filled Jerusalem with the innocent blood of the men who protested against his evil ways. He it was who burned in the fire the roll whereon Jeremiah had written God's warning against all the wickedness that was destroying the land. The prophet said of him that he should be buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem; and so it came to pass. Necho, his first overlord, was utterly defeated by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon at Carchemish, and for a while Jehoiakim became vassal to the victor. Then in utter madness, he rebelled. The stern soldiers of Nebuchadnezzar swept over the land, captured the rebel King, and carried him in chains to Babylon. Then he was brought back to Jerusa-

lem, and there, whether murdered by his outraged subjects, or slain by his captors, he died, and was cast forth unlamented to the vultures and the jackals.

In his stead reigned Jehoiachim, his son; but only for a short three months. For once more the armies of Nebuchadnezzar gathered around Jerusalem, and to save the Holy City from sack and slaughter, the young King gave himself up to the foe. Nebuchadnezzar carried him away to Babylon, and with him all the pick of the Jewish race, and all the remaining treasures of the Temple and the palace. None were left in the land save the poorest of the people; and over them the King of Babylon set Zedekiah, the brother of the lost Jehoahaz,—a King of shreds and patches. For nine years he reigned; then he, too, rebelled against his master. His madness brought upon Judah the last and most dreadful of its judgments. The mighty King of Babylon beleaguered Jerusalem, and girdled it for a terrible eighteen months with a ring of iron. Starvation stalked through the streets; and at last the fierce Babylonian soldiers stormed the walls and carried fire and sword through the Holy City. They spared neither young nor old,—young men and maidens, old men and children were ruthlessly put to the sword till the streets were cumbered with the slain. Zedekiah and his household troops made one last despairing effort to break through the iron circle of their foes; but they were overtaken in the plains of Jericho, and brought in fetters before their ruthless conqueror. The tender mercies of Nebuchadnezzar were cruel. Zedekiah's sons were slain before his face; then the miserable King's eyes were put out, and he was led away, bound with chains of bronze, to his Babylonian prison. With him were taken all the best of the Jewish race who still remained in the land, so that none were left but ploughmen and vine-dressers to till the fields and tend the vineyards.

Jerusalem was wasted with an utter destruction. The Temple was rifled of the last of its treasures,—the very pillars, Steadfastness and Strength, that Solomon had set up in the great days of old, were carried off in triumph; and the holy and beautiful House, the glory of the land for so many generations, was burned with fire. The strong walls of the city were levelled with the ground,

and the blackened ruins were left to be a resting-place for the owl and the bat.

So, for its faithlessness and sin, God sent His judgments upon the Kingdom of Judah; and the house of David fell,—to rise no more.

Part VII. *Stories of Exile*

(1) BY THE RIVERS OF BABYLON

NOW, indeed, it seemed as though the glory had departed from Israel for ever. God's people were scattered, a desolate remnant, far in the Land of the Rivers,—that same land from which their father Abraham had come forth, but now a strange land to them. Jerusalem was a waste and a desolation; the holy and beautiful House where their fathers worshipped was burned with fire; and in exile and servitude the men of Israel were learning how evil and bitter a thing it was to depart from the Lord. They were dwelling in the most beautiful land on earth. On all sides of them stretched the great plains of Babylonia, waving with crops the like of which no other land in all the world could show, the waters of the great river were led in all directions through the fields by wonderful canals. The long mountain ridge of Palestine was bare and barren compared with their new home.

In the midst of all the fertility lay the greatest city of the world, the mighty Babylon, where Nebuchadnezzar held his court. Today Babylon itself is but a heap of desolate ruins in the midst of a wilderness, where men dig to find the pitiful remains of former splendour, but in those days it was the proudest city under the sun. Far and wide for miles on every hand ran its vast ramparts, so broad that four chariots could drive abreast along the top, gated with bronze, and crowned with towers. Through the heart of the town flowed the blue Euphrates, bringing all the produce of the land to the quays and wharves of the great city. There, on a mighty mound of earth faced with enamelled bricks, stood the huge palace of the King, with its wonderful hanging gardens, reared to remind Nebuchadnezzar's queen of her mountain home, where green lawns, and gay flower-beds, and shrubberies rose, slope above slope, on arches of brickwork.

High over all shone the splendour of the lofty temple-tower, with its seven stages, each named from one of the planets of heaven, and each bearing the colour of the planet to which it belonged. On its summit was the golden shrine of Bel, the great god of Babylon, and under its shadow lay the vast temple. Very wonderful and strange it must all have seemed to the men from little Palestine, whose beloved Temple in Mount Zion would have scarce furnished one chamber of the temple of Bel. But their hearts were not won by the beauty, nor their eyes dazzled by the magnificence of the great city.

To them Palestine was still home. All the story of their great past belonged to the bare limestone ridge where their fathers had dwelt, all their hope for the future was of restoration to their ruined homes. The splendour of the idolatry around them had no power to win their hearts; it only sickened them, and made them turn again with purer faith than ever before to seek the God of their fathers. In those days there arose among the exiles some of the sweetest singers of Israel's history, who put into words that will never die all the passion and the longing of the exiles for their homeland. Here is one of their songs, burdened with a load of sorrow and longing that touches our hearts still, flashing out into fierce lightning of hatred that we, who have never known their grief, can scarcely understand, but can hardly condemn.

"By the rivers of Babylon,
There we sat down, yea we wept
When we remembered Zion.
Upon the willows in the midst thereof
We hanged up our harps.
For there they that led us captive required of us songs,
And they that wasted us required of us mirth,
'Sing us one of the songs of Zion.'
How shall we sing the Lord's song
In a strange land?
If I forget thee, O Jerusalem,
Let my right hand forget her cunning,
Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth,

If I remember thee not:
If I prefer not Jerusalem
Above my chief joy.
Remember, O Lord, against the children of Edom
The day of Jerusalem;
For they said, 'Raze it, raze it
To the very foundations!'
O daughter of Babylon, that art to be destroyed;
Happy shall he be, that rewardeth thee
As thou hast served us.
Happy shall he be, that taketh and dasheth thy little ones
Against the rock."

Through all the sorrow and regret for the golden days of the past there ran a strange note of hope and expectation. Their exile, they felt, was not for always. Even the power of their oppressor could not endure for ever. The time would come when even the mighty Babylon should fall before a greater conqueror, and when the Lord should bring back again the captivity of Zion. God gave them more than one great prophet to keep alive their hope in their hearts, and some of the words of these men are among the things that the world will never forget.

One of our own great poets has put into verse a few lines from one of these immortal songs of hope.

"*The Lord will have mercy on Jacob yet,*
And again in his border see Israel set.
When Judah beholds Jerusalem,
The stranger-seed shall be joined to them:
To Jacob's House shall the Gentiles cleave.
So the prophet saith and his sons believe.
Ay, the children of the chosen race
Shall carry and bring them to their place:
In the land of the Lord shall lead the same,
Bondmen and handmaids. Who shall blame,
When the slaves enslave, the oppressed ones o'er
The oppressor triumph for evermore?"

But only his own words can give us the fierce lightning of scorn and hatred with which the prophet blasts the very name of the great city of oppression.

"How art thou fallen from heaven,
O Lucifer, son of the morning!
How art thou hewn down to the earth,
Thou which didst weaken the nations!
For thou hast said in thine heart
'The heavens will I scale,
Far up to the bright stars of God
Lift high my throne.
On the heights of the cloud will I climb,
I will match the Most High! . . . .'
Down into Hell thou art hurled
To the uttermost parts of the Pit!"

And God gave to another of His servants, the great prophet Ezekiel, who dwelt with the exiles by the canal Chebar in Babylonia, a vision that taught him how even a nation which, like the Jewish people, seemed dead, might yet revive and live again. He led His servant out into a valley where the slain of some vast battle were lying unburied. All around there was nothing but the poor white bones, and they were very dry. "Son of man," came the voice of God to the prophet, as he looked on the ghastly sight, "Son of man, can these bones live?" And Ezekiel answered, "O Lord God, thou knowest." "Prophesy upon these bones," the voice came again, "and say unto them, 'O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I am the Lord.'" Ezekiel obeyed; and lo! as he spake, there came a rattling and a shaking, and the bones came together, each bone to its fellow. And while the awe-struck prophet looked, flesh and sinews and skin grew up and covered the bones, till not skeletons but men lay before him. Still there was no life in them; but the voice spake again, "Prophesy unto the wind, Son of man, and say to the wind, 'Thus saith the Lord God, Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.'" And when Ezekiel

obeyed, behold! life came into all the dead men, and they arose and stood upon their feet, an exceeding great army.

Then God bade His servant tell His people of what he had seen, and say to them, "Thus saith the Lord God, 'Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel.'" By such voices hope was kept alive in the hearts of the exiles through all the long years of captivity. Nor were they ever without great men of their own race to be their leaders and to be witnesses for Jehovah, as you shall hear, among the heathen with whom their lot was cast.

(2) NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S DREAMS

MONG the captives whom Nebuchadnezzar carried away to Babylon along with King Jehoiakim, were four Jewish boys of noble birth, whose names were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. Now it fell out that the King wished to have some of the Hebrew lads as pages in his royal palace. So he gave command to Ashpenaz, the chief of his household, to choose out certain of the handsomest among them, and to train them for three years, that they might stand before him; and among those who were chosen were the four whose names you have heard. Ashpenaz gave them Babylonian names instead of their own. Daniel, he called Belteshazzar; Hananiah was named Shadrach; Mishael, Meshach; and Azariah, Abed-nego.

Now the rule of the court was that these boys were to eat of the King's meat, and drink of the King's wine; but Daniel and his three companions were minded that they would not defile themselves by eating of the meat from the King's table, because it was unclean according to Jewish law. Daniel was in high favour with the Master of the Household, and he told him of their resolve. "But," said Ashpenaz, "my lord the King hath appointed your meat and drink. What if he should see you looking thinner and less hearty than the other boys of your rank? I may well risk my

head in this matter." "Test us for ten days," said Daniel. "Give us only herbs and fruit to eat, and water to drink; then judge us by comparison with the others, and we will abide by the result." So for ten days the thing was tried, and lo! Daniel and his three friends were healthier and fairer at the end than the boys who were fed from the King's table. Therefore Ashpenaz let them have their way, and these four boys, obeying God's law, had God's blessing upon them, and excelled all the others in knowledge and wisdom, insomuch that they were set foremost of all the King's pages, and found great favour in his sight for their wisdom.

One morning the great King rose from his bed, sore troubled in his mind. A dream had come to him in the night, and vexed his spirit, so that sleep forsook him; but the dream was gone, and he could not recall it. He summoned all his wise men, the Chaldean star-gazers, the wizards, and the magicians, and they came and bowed before him. Then said the King, "I have dreamed a dream that troubled my spirit, and I would fain know what it was." "O King, live for ever!" said the wise men. "Tell thy servants the dream, and we will read thee its meaning." "Nay," said Nebuchadnezzar, "the thing is gone from me,—it is your business to tell me the dream and its meaning. If ye cannot do it, then ye shall be hewn in pieces, and your houses made into ash-heaps; but if ye can tell the dream and its meaning, great shall be your reward and honour."

Sore was the dismay of the magicians. "There is not a man upon earth," they said, "who can shew this business of the King. Never hath any king asked such a thing of his wise men. None can do it save the gods, whose dwelling is not in flesh." The great King flamed up in furious anger. "Slay me all the wise men in Babylon," he cried, and the guard went forth to do his mad bidding. But when Daniel heard of the hasty decree from Arioch, the captain of the guard, he begged of King Nebuchadnezzar to give him time, and the dream and the interpretation of it should be told. Then he and his three friends prayed earnestly to God to reveal the matter to them, that they and all the wise men of Babylon might be saved from death; and God revealed the secret to Daniel in a vision.

He sought the captain of the guard again. "Slay not the wise men," he said. "Bring me before the King, and I will show him the meaning of his dream." In haste Arioch brought Daniel into the presence. "Here, O King," he said, "is a man of the captives of Judah who can tell thee the meaning of thy dream." "Art thou able, Belteshazzar," said Nebuchadnezzar, "to tell me my dream and its meaning?" Then Daniel answered: "Neither wizard nor star-gazer can shew the secret which the King hath asked; but there is a God in heaven who revealeth secrets, and hath shewn to King Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in after days. This was thy dream. Lying on thy bed, thou thoughtest of what should come to pass hereafter. And behold, before thine eyes there stood a mighty image, dazzling in brightness, and terrible of aspect. The head of the image was of gold, its breast and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of brass, its legs of iron, its feet of iron mingled with clay.

"Now as thou didst gaze upon this image, there came a great stone hewn without hands, and smote the image on its feet of iron and clay, and brake them in pieces. Then the iron and the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, all tumbled together into ruin, and were ground to powder, so that the wind carried them away like the chaff from a summer threshing-floor. But this stone that smote the image grew into a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.

"This was thy dream; hearken now to its interpretation. O King, thou art King of kings, for the God of Heaven hath given thee kingdom and power, strength and glory. Thou art the head of gold. After thee, there shall arise a kingdom less than thine; then a third kingdom of brass, which shall rule over all the earth; and then there shall be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron, which breaketh all things, but mixed with weakness as the iron was mixed with clay. Then shall the God of Heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; it shall be the stone hewn without hands, and shall break in pieces all the other kingdoms; but itself shall stand for ever. The great God hath made known to the King what shall come to pass hereafter: the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure."

King Nebuchadnezzar bowed himself humbly and made obeisance to the Spirit of God in His servant Daniel, and gave command that an offering of sweet incense should be made. "True it is," he said, "that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets." To Daniel he gave great honour and many gifts, and made him satrap of the province of Babylon, and chief of the wise men. Daniel craved the King to set Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego over the business of the province; but he himself was of the King's council that sat in the gate of the palace.

(3) THE FIERY FURNACE

N the pride of his heart King Nebuchadnezzar made a great image of gold, whose breadth was nine feet, and its height ninety; and he set it up in the plain of Dura, nigh to the great city of Babylon. Then his decree went forth throughout the land, and all the princes, the satraps, the captains, the judges, the treasurers, and the counsellors, all the chief men of the empire were gathered together to the dedication of this mighty image of gold.

Far as the eye could reach across the plain stretched the vast gathering, waiting for the hour when the first ray of dawn should strike the golden crest of the great statue. A herald stood forth, and shouted with a great voice, "Hear the command, O peoples, nations, and languages. When ye hear the sound of trumpet, flute, harp, and pipe, and all kinds of music, ye shall fall down and worship the golden image which Nebuchadnezzar the King hath set up. And he that falleth not down, nor worshippeth, shall be cast straightway into a furnace of fire."

The trumpets blew, and the whole vast multitude bowed in worship before the golden image—all save three. Then came some priests of the Chaldeans before the King, with a complaint. "O King," they said, "certain Jews whom thou didst set over the province of Babylon—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego—these

men have scorned thee: they care not for thy gods, and they have not bowed before thine image of gold."

In fierce anger Nebuchadnezzar bade bring the men before him. "Is it true," he cried, "O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, that ye do not serve my gods, nor worship mine image? Ye have yet a chance. Fall down and worship when the trumpets sound again. If ye worship not, ye shall straightway be cast into the fiery furnace; and what God shall deliver you out of my hand?" "No need, O King, for us to answer thee," said the three, "our God can deliver us both from thy furnace and thine hand. But whether He save us or not, know, O King, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship thy golden image."

So furious was Nebuchadnezzar at that defiance that his face was distorted with rage. "Heat me the furnace seven times hotter than its wont," he cried. And when it was done, he bade the stoutest of his guards bind the three men, even as they stood, with their mantles, turbans, and girdles, and cast them into the midst of the quivering heat. So fierce was the blast of flame that the men who cast in Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego themselves were scorched and withered by it; and these three fell down into the raging blaze.

Suddenly Nebuchadnezzar sprang from his throne in great amaze. "Did not we cast three men bound into the fire?" he cried to his counsellors. "Surely, O King," they said. "Lo!" said the King, "I see four men, unbound and unharmed, walking in the midst of the fire; and the form of the fourth is like a son of the gods."

Tremblingly the great King drew near to the mouth of the flaming kiln. "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego," he cried, "ye servants of God most high, come forth, and come hither." Out from the blinding glare and heat came the three Hebrews, and all men gathered around them. Not a trace was on their bodies of the power of fire; not a hair of their heads was singed; their garments were not scorched, nor was there even the smell of fire upon them. Nebuchadnezzar spoke again. "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego," he said, "who hath sent His angel, and saved His servants who trusted in Him and

dared the King's word, yielding their bodies rather than worship any other god." Then he made a decree that no man should speak evil of the God of those three men, lest his body should be cut in pieces and his house made into an ash-heap, "because there is no other god that can deliver in this fashion."

So Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego prospered in the province of Babylon.

Thereafter Nebuchadnezzar the King had another dream that filled him with fear, and none of his wise men could read its meaning to him, till at the last Daniel was summoned and came into the presence. "O Belteshazzar, master of the magicians," said the King to him, "tell me the meaning of the dream which I have seen; for the spirit of the holy gods is in thee. I beheld, and lo! there was a great tree in the midst of the earth, and it grew and was strong, so that its height reached to heaven, and it could be seen from the ends of the earth. Its leaves were fair, and it bore fruit for all in great plenty; under its shadow the cattle lay down, and in its branches nested the birds of heaven. Then out of heaven came one of the holy watchers and cried with a mighty voice, 'Hew down the tree, and cut off its branches, shake off its leaves, and scatter its fruit. Drive the beasts from beneath it, and the birds from its branches. Yet leave in the earth its stump, bound with a band of iron and bronze, among the soft grass of the field, and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and have its portion with the beasts till time be passed sevenfold.'"

Then Daniel told to King Nebuchadnezzar the meaning of his dream; and in due course all that he said came to pass. For, a twelvemonth after, the King walked upon his palace roof, and looked down from his towers over the great city stretching far and wide to the horizon; and his heart was lifted up with pride. "Is not this mighty Babylon," he said to himself, "which I have built for the King's house, by the might of my power, and for the glory of my majesty?" While the words were yet on his lips, it seemed that there fell a voice from heaven, and its words were these. "O King Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken: The kingdom is departed from thee. They shall drive thee from among men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts, and grass shalt thou eat.

DANIEL AND NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S DREAM.
(Daniel, ii, 25.)

Time shall pass over thee sevenfold, until thou hast learned that the Most High ruleth among men, and giveth the kingdom to whomsoever He will."

At that word madness fell upon the great King. He was driven from among men, and dwelt with the beasts, and lived like a beast, till his hair grew like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws. The tree was cut down, as his dream had warned him, till naught but the stump was left, bound with iron and bronze, and wet with the dew of heaven.

"Then," said the King, when his madness had passed, "when the appointed time was come, I lifted up mine eyes to heaven, and my reason returned to me. The glory and honour of my kingdom were restored to me; my counsellors and my lords sought me again. I was confirmed in my kingdom, and yet more excellent majesty was added unto me. Therefore I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise, and extol, and honour the King of Heaven, all whose works are truth, and His ways judgment: and those that walk in pride He is able to abase."

(4) BELSHAZZAR'S FEAST

EARS passed away, and the great King Nebuchadnezzar went to his rest. With him died the real glory and power of mighty Babylon. The kings who succeeded him were feeble men, who reigned but for a little while; and when Nabonidus, the last King of Babylon, came to the throne, dangers were already gathering darkly about his kingdom. Cyrus, the great King of Persia, with the Medes as his allies, was threatening invasion, and Nabonidus, a weak, priest-ridden monarch, was not the man to resist this new conqueror with his hardy soldiers from the hills. Indeed the real leadership of the land lay not in the hands of the King, but in those of his son Belshazzar, who was King in all but name.

Now the hour of doom drew nigh, and the army of the Persians and Medes, after routing the Babylonian host in the field, had

drawn its iron lines around the walls of the great city. Within the beleaguered city, Belshazzar made a last great feast to his courtiers. One thousand of the nobles of Babylon were gathered together in the hall of the royal palace, and the wine flowed fast and free. Then King Belshazzar bade his servants bring the spoil of the ancient triumphs of his race, the sacred golden vessels which his mighty forefather Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the Temple at Jerusalem, into the hall, that he and his princes and the women of the harem might drink therefrom. It was done as he commanded; and as the mad revellers handled the holy vessels they shouted praise to the false gods of Babylon,—the gods whose helplessness to save was being proved even while they drank.

In that same hour there appeared the fingers of a human hand writing upon the plaster of the wall over against the place where stood the great seven-branched lamp-stand of the Temple. Belshazzar saw the hand as it wrote and then vanished; his face fell, dark thoughts rushed over his mind, his sinews were slackened, and his knees knocked together. Loudly he called for his soothsayers and magicians, and bade them read that which was written and show the meaning thereof; but there was none who could read the writing, nor interpret it.

Then came the queen-mother into the midst of all the tumult of the banqueting hall. "O King, live for ever," she said, "there is a man in thy kingdom in whom is the spirit of the holy gods. Such wisdom was found in him that in the days of thy forefathers King Nebuchadnezzar made him chief of all the magicians and soothsayers. Send for this Daniel, whom the King named Belteshazzar, and he will interpret this writing for thee."

Daniel was brought in, and stood before Belshazzar. "If thou canst read the writing, and interpret it," said the King to him, "I will clothe thee with scarlet, and put a chain of gold about thy neck; and thou shalt be the third ruler in the kingdom." "Keep thy gifts to thyself, O King," answered Daniel, "and give thy fees to another. Yet will I read the writing, and interpret it to thee. God most high gave to thy forefather Nebuchadnezzar a kingdom of glory and majesty. All nations feared before him; for it was his to slay or spare, to set up or put down. When his

heart was lifted up in pride, God cast him down, and drove him to dwell with the wild asses, till that he was humbled, and knew that God alone is the ruler. Yet knowing all this, thou, Belshazzar, hast not humbled thyself, but hast lifted thyself up against the God of Heaven, and hast drunk wine, thou, and thy princes, and thy women, out of the holy vessels of His House. Thou hast praised the gods of gold and silver, stone and wood, creatures that neither see, nor hear, nor know; but the God in Whose hand is thy breath, and Whose are all thy ways, thou hast not glorified. The hand was sent from Him; and this is the writing that was written. *Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin! Numbered, Numbered, Weighed, Divided!*

Numbered:—God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it.

Weighed:—Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting.

Divided:—Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.

Then was Daniel robed in scarlet, and a chain of gold was hung about his neck, and proclamation was made that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom. But that very night the mighty city of Babylon fell, by the treachery of its false priests, into the hands of the Persians, and Belshazzar was slain. And Cyrus, the conqueror, set over the kingdom of Babylon Darius the Mede, to rule the same for him.

(5) THE DEN OF LIONS

NOW for the better governance of his kingdom, Darius set over its provinces an hundred and twenty satraps; and as chief over these he appointed three princes, to whom the satraps should make report, that the King's interest might be safeguarded; and of these three, Daniel was the first in rank. So great was the wisdom of Daniel that the King designed to set him over the whole realm. Therefore the princes and the satraps were jealous of him, and sought earnestly

to overthrow him; but no fault could they find in his faithfulness.

So they took counsel together and came before the King. "Long live King Darius," they said. "We, the princes, satraps and rulers, have agreed together to ask thee to set up a royal decree that whosoever, for thirty days, shall make prayer to any god or man, save only to thyself, O King, shall be cast into the den of lions. Therefore, O King, proclaim and sign the decree, so that it shall be unchangeable, according to the custom of the land."

Unthinking, King Darius did as they desired, little dreaming that he was signing the doom of his most faithful servant. For Daniel, when he knew that the decree was signed, did even as he was wont to do aforetime. He went to his own house, and there, with his windows open towards Jerusalem, he kneeled down, and prayed to God three times a day, as had ever been his custom. His enemies brake in upon his prayers, and haled him before the King. "This Daniel," they said, "a captive of the exiles of Judah, careth not for thee or thy decree, O King, but prayeth to his God three times a day."

When the King saw the trap into which he had fallen and dragged his servant, he was sore vexed at his own folly. All that day till sunset he pled with those evil-minded men to spare Daniel, but in vain. Weening that they had their hated rival in their power they stood fast to it that the law, once signed, was unchangeable; and the King was helpless before them. At last he gave commandment, with a heavy heart, to cast Daniel to the lions. "Thy God—" he said to his faithful servant, "thy God, whom thou servest continually—He will deliver thee;" and he spake truer than he knew.

So Daniel was cast into the pit, and a great stone was laid over the mouth thereof, and sealed with the royal signet, that none might deliver Daniel; and the King, in his palace, spent the night in fasting and in sorrow. As soon as it was day, he hastened to the mouth of the pit, and caused it to be opened. "Daniel," he cried with a lamentable voice, "O Daniel, servant of the living God, has thy God been able to deliver thee from the lions?" Up from the dark depths came a voice that Darius had never thought to hear

again. "Long live the King! My God hath sent his angel, and shut the lions' mouths, so that they have not hurt me; because I was guiltless before both Him and thee."

Right glad was King Darius at that word. He gave command, and Daniel was drawn up unhurt out of the pit. Then came swift vengeance on the men who had sought to trap an innocent man. They that had accused Daniel were cast themselves into the pit, with their wives and their children; and so furious were the ravening lions that they caught them even as they fell, and rent them in pieces ere ever they reached the bottom of the den. Then Darius made a decree bidding all men in all parts of his dominion tremble and fear before the great God eternal who had delivered Daniel from the power of the lions. And Daniel came to great honour and prosperity under both Darius and Cyrus, his overlord. God sent him many wonderful visions of things that should come to pass. And the last word that God spake to His faithful servant was this—"Go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days."

Part VIII. *Stories of the Return*

(1) REBUILDING THE TEMPLE

NOW had come the time when the Lord should bring back again the Captivity of Zion. Cyrus, the great conqueror of Babylon, sent forth a decree throughout all his kingdom, bidding the children of Israel return to their land. "Thus saith Cyrus, King of Persia, 'The Lord God of Heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and He hath charged me to build Him an House at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who among you is of His people? God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, and build therein the House of the Lord God of Israel.'"

With glad hearts the captives gathered together for their long journey homewards. The number of their company was forty-two thousand three hundred and sixty, besides seven thousand three hundred and thirty-seven servants. A prince of the house of David, Zerubbabel, was made leader over them, and they who were not able to go forth with them from Babylon gladly gave gifts of gold and silver for the adorning of God's House, and of beasts of burden for the journey. Cyrus himself caused the sacred vessels of the Temple of Solomon to be brought forth out of the royal treasuries of Babylon, and to be given back to the returning exiles; and the number of these vessels of gold and silver was five thousand four hundred.

So the great caravan set out for its journey across the desert, a mighty train of men and women and children, of camels, horses, and asses; and after weary months of travel, they reached their beloved homeland, and began to settle down in their native towns and villages.

The seventh month came, the month of the great feasts, and all

the people gathered themselves together to Jerusalem. In the midst of the desolation that had once been God's holy Temple, they set up on the rock of Mount Moriah the great altar of burnt-offering, and once again the smoke of the morning and evening sacrifice went up from the holy hill. Then they gathered branches, and made themselves green booths to dwell in according to the ancient custom; and so they kept the joyful Feast of Tabernacles. From that time onwards all the daily sacrifices and appointed festivals of the nation were duly kept as in the days of old; but as yet naught had been done as to the rebuilding of the Temple.

First of all, preparation had to be made. Bargains were made with the Phœnicians of Tyre and Sidon, and the foresters went up into Lebanon and hewed down great cedar-trees, and the wood was brought by sea in floats to Joppa, and thence to Jerusalem; stone was hewed in the hills, and prepared for the building: and at last in the second month of the second year of the Return from Captivity, the foundation of the new Temple was laid.

It was a scene of mingled joy and grief. There were gathered the priests in their stately apparel, with their trumpets, and the Levites with cymbals, to lead the song of praise; and from choir to choir around the Temple court there rolled the ancient psalm that had risen to heaven when the first House of God was built. "O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good. For His mercy endureth for ever."

When the psalm of praise was ended, the people shouted with a great shout, for joy that the foundation of God's House was laid. But there were men there, old and white-haired now, who remembered the glory of the former Temple, and when they contrasted its splendour with the poor, mean work that they saw, they wept aloud, so that it might scarce be told whether the noise of the great multitude was noise of joy or sorrow.

Meanwhile word had been carried to the men of Samaria of the work that was being done in Jerusalem by the returned exiles. Now these Samaritans were the children of the outlandish tribes who had been settled in northern Israel by the King of Nineveh, when he carried captive the ten tribes; and they had learned, as you have heard, something of the worship of Jehovah from He-

brew priests who were sent to dwell among them. So they sent a message to Zerubbabel and the chiefs of the Jews—"Let us join with you in building. We seek your God, even as ye do, and we sacrifice to Him, ever since the days of Esar-haddon, King of Assyria, who brought us hither." But Zerubbabel and the Jews would have none of such half-heathen help. "Ye have no part with us in building our House to our God; we build by ourselves alone, as Cyrus, King of Persia, hath bidden us." And this answer was the beginning of the unending feud between the men of Judah and the men of Samaria, so that it came to be a by-word at last—"The Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans."

Nor was it very long before the ill-will and spite of the Samaritans found vent. For they sent letters to the King of Persia, accusing the Jews of wishing to stir up rebellion, and to make themselves independent of their overlord; and orders came back from the King that the work should cease until the matter was further inquired into. It was a sore blow to the men of Judah, and behind it came other disasters. The very heavens seemed to frown on them. The land, gone back almost to wilderness, yielded but poor returns to their husbandry; drought and mildew and hail blasted the scanty crops; and men's hearts sank under the fear that God's anger still lay upon them. The time had not yet come, they thought, for the House of Jehovah to be built. So for a season the work stood still.

Then God sent two of His servants, the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, to put new heart into the men of Judah. Haggai taught them that if, as they believed, God's anger had been shewn in the blasting of their crops, it was because they had been slack and faint-hearted in the work of His House, and had cared only for their own affairs. Let them arise and build with heart and hand, and they should see that God was with them still. "The glory of this latter House shall be greater than that of the former, saith the Lord of Hosts." Haggai's words of cheer were seconded by the younger prophet Zechariah, who promised them that God's House should yet be built in Jerusalem, and that the Lord should comfort Zion.

So the exiles took heart once more, and girded themselves with

fresh strength to their task. They had not wrought for long, when Tatnai, the Persian satrap of the province of Syria, came to inspect this part of his province. To his surprise he found a great building rising in Jerusalem, of which he knew nothing. At once he challenged the leaders of the people, and demanded to know what authority they had for so great a work. Zerubbabel and his companions referred him to the edict of Cyrus, and Tatnai sent a letter to Darius at Babylon, requesting that search should be made in the royal archives for the decree of the great King.

With anxious hearts the men of Jerusalem waited the event of the search; for the success or failure of their great enterprise hung on the finding of the decree. At last the post came back from Babylon with an answer that made their hearts leap for joy. Among the records of Babylon there had been no trace of the edict of Cyrus; but there were other royal libraries besides the great one at Babylon, and in one of them, away in far Ecbatana, the tile-book of clay was found, with the decree of Cyrus written on it in the curious arrow-head character, and the seal of the great King affixed. It was enough for Darius. At once he sent back word to Tatnai to refrain from all interference with the work which Cyrus had commanded. Not only so, but he gave orders also to the satrap to give a subsidy from the funds of the province for the furthering of the work, and for the maintenance of the sacrifices when the building should be complete. "Also I have made a decree," so ran the conclusion of the letter of King Darius, "that if any one transgress my word in this matter his house shall be plucked down, the timber thereof set up, and he himself crucified thereon."

With such sanctions and encouragements it was not long before the long-delayed work was completed. In the sixth year of Darius, twenty years after the Return, the House of God stood finished once more upon Mount Zion. To it were gathered together all the children of Israel, and a great Feast of Dedication was held. Indeed the offerings were but paltry, compared with the hecatombs that Solomon had given in sacrifice—yet none the less the hearts of the men of Judah were filled with a deep joy when they saw the reproach of their land removed from among the nations.

For seven days they kept the Feast of the Passover, giving thanks for a deliverance that seemed to them well-nigh as great as the deliverance from Egypt had seemed to their fathers in the days of old.

(2) EZRA THE SCRIBE

HOUGH the Temple was built again, the men of the Restoration were still in need of further help from Babylon; and above all they needed men who should instruct them in the Law of God. For they were but an handful in the midst of the heathen nations, and the danger was great that they should mix themselves with the idolators around them, and the pure stock of Israel perish from the earth. Already many of them had taken to them wives from the heathen tribes, and what these had done, more might do. Now in far-off Babylon there dwelt a very learned scribe, Ezra by name, a man skilled in all the Law of Moses, and very zealous for the honour of Jehovah and the well-being of his people. This man, who was one of the seven counsellors of Artaxerxes, the great King in Babylon, obtained from his master a decree, bidding him go to Jerusalem, with all who chose to go with him, bearing gifts for the service of the Temple, and giving him authority to order the sacrifices and the worship of God's House, and to instruct the people in the Law. And King Artaxerxes bade his satraps and the chiefs of his treasury in Syria help Ezra with all diligence, and grant him supplies, both in money and in kind, for the carrying on of his work.

So Ezra gathered a company of fifteen hundred men, besides women and children, whose hearts were set on returning to Jerusalem, and with them they bore a great treasure of gold and silver, well-nigh a million pounds' worth, which had been given as a free-will offering by King Artaxerxes and his princes, and the exiles in Babylon. The great King would fain have given his servant an armed guard for the perilous journey across the desert; but Ezra would have none. Always he had spoken to the King of the power of Jehovah to deliver His own; and after such brave words he was

ashamed to ask for soldiers, lest Artaxerxes should deem that his faith had failed him. So, after prayer and fasting, the great caravan set out unguarded, and after three and a half months of journeying they safely passed the desert and came to Jerusalem.

On the fourth day after his return, Ezra handed over his treasure to the guardians of the Temple. Then came the question of what was to be done in the matter of intermarriage with the heathen. When he had inquired into it, Ezra was shocked beyond measure to learn that the priests and Levites had been foremost in breaking the Law, and in allying themselves with pagan wives. The rigid scribe rent his garments and tore his beard at the report of such an infamy, and sat speechless and stupefied on the ground from morning till evening. Crowds gathered round him, and marked his grief with awe and wonder; and when, at the evening sacrifice, he knelt and acknowledged the nation's sin before God, their feelings were wrought to such a pitch that he had no difficulty in persuading them to take an oath that all the foreign women should be put away. For two months a tribunal sat, dealing with all the cases of foreign marriage; and by the new year the stern scribe was able to write that they had "made an end with all the men that had taken strange wives."

But hearts are hearts, even though the letter of the Law forbid their union. Ezra had rid his people of what he judged a great sin against the Law of God; but he had broken the lives of many of his fellow countrymen, who saw the wives and children whom they loved torn ruthlessly from them; and he had grievously offended all the races around, whose daughters, honourably married to Jewish husbands, were now sent back to them in shame and grief. Soon he found that he had raised a hatred that was stronger than he could face. Jerusalem was still unfortified, and he and his party took steps to put the city into a state of defence. But his enemies made suit to the Persian officials of the province, representing that the work should be stopped, lest the Jews should break away from the empire and become independent. Artaxerxes yielded to the advice of his officers, and sent forth a decree ordering the work to be suspended. Armed with this authority, the Persian governors put an end to Ezra's work by force, brake

down the walls that had been built, and burned the gates with fire. Once more Jerusalem was left defenceless, and it seemed as though Ezra's work was all undone. He himself was shamed and discredited by his failure, and for twelve years we hear no more of him, or of the fate of the Holy City.

(3) SWORD AND TROWEL

AWAY in Persia, however, God was preparing a new deliverer for His ancient people. Among the officials of the Persian court, none stood nearer to the King, or held a post more coveted or more responsible, than the King's cup-bearer, on whose faithfulness and care the very life of his master depended. Now in those dark days, when it seemed as though the restoration of Israel had ended in failure, the cup-bearer of King Artaxerxes was a noble and wealthy Jew, Nehemiah by name, a man of high and honourable character, brave and devout, and above all a great lover of his nation and his desolate land. There came to Susa, where Nehemiah served in the royal palace, a messenger from Jerusalem, bearing a doleful story of the miserable plight of the city and its inhabitants. The news was bitter to Nehemiah's heart, and ever as he thought on it he grieved the more, until at last King Artaxerxes noticed the sadness of his faithful servant, and asked its cause.

The brave cup-bearer needed all his courage to tell his master the truth, and beg a commission that would mean the leaving of his duties for many a month; but with a silent prayer to Heaven for strength, he faced the danger of the royal anger, and besought Artaxerxes to send him into Judah with power to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. It chanced that Artaxerxes, a well-meaning, easy, fickle man, was in a good mood that night, and ere long Nehemiah was riding hard for the Holy City, with Persian troopers at his back, and the King's firman in his scrip, giving him authority over the land and the needed warrant for all supplies.

Three days after he arrived in Jerusalem, the sentries who kept

guard by the fire-blackened gates saw their new master with a handful of spearmen behind him passing out, when night had fallen, from the city. Nehemiah rode on a mule, his guards were on foot; and the little company slowly made the circuit of the ruined walls. The bright Syrian moonlight threw black shadows from the tumbled masses of stone; wild beasts slunk away, growling, before the intruders, and owls, disturbed, flitted past them on noiseless wings. Inside the circle of ruins the city slept, while the new leader searched out, with his own eyes, the shame and desolation of his home. From the Dragon Well to the Pool of Siloam he rode, scanning the pitiful wrecks of Ezra's thwarted scheme. Thence, for a while, the ruins lay too thick in the narrow valley for his mule to pass, and he had to complete the circuit by the Brook Kidron on foot.

Next morning he summoned the notables of the city, and, with the picture of all that he had seen in that eerie night ride still before his eyes, he told them that he had come, with the King's firman, to make an end of the reproach of Judah; and their weary hearts revived again, and they made them ready for the good work. It was well for Judah that her new ruler was not a dreamy enthusiast like Ezra, but a shrewd, strong, practical man of the world, skilled in the wiles of courts, swift to read men's minds, and prompt to act; for again the enemies of Judah, led by three evil men, Sanballat the Horonite, the leader of the Samaritans, Tobiah, an Ammonite slave, and a creature of Sanballat's, and Geshem, a wild Arab chief, strove to make mischief and to hinder the work. Plot after plot they laid to entrap Nehemiah and get him into their power, but the man who had been king's cup-bearer in Susa, and held his own amidst all the intrigues of the Persian court, laughed at the clumsy wiles of these provincial plotters, and broke through all their snares. Baffled and humiliated, the enemies of Judah threatened to stop the work by force; but the governor shewed that he was ready to meet force with force. Day by day as the builders toiled and the walls rose, armed guards of bowmen and spearmen stood behind them, while the builders themselves were harnessed for war, and wrought with their swords girded on their sides, and their trowels in hand. So from dawn till the stars

shone in the darkening sky, the heavy toil went on, and in fifty-two days the wall was completed, the great gates were hung upon their hinges, and Jerusalem was once more a fenced city.

Then followed a great festival of dedication. The whole population of the land was gathered together, and marshalled in two great companies, each led by priests and Levites with trumpets and cymbals and choirs of singers. Starting from the Valley Gate of the city, one company went eastwards along the top of the walls, and the other westwards, until they met at the Temple, and there gave praise to God who had brought them through their troubles. So the new-built walls were sanctified, and all men rejoiced in the completion of Nehemiah's work.

Nor did the leader who had succeeded forget, in his hour of triumph, the leader who had failed. Ezra the scribe was brought forth again from the obscurity into which he had fallen, and with solemn earnestness he read to the mighty gathering, hour after hour, the book of the Law of Jehovah, till the people, stricken in heart and conscience, broke down and wept, so that Nehemiah and Ezra were fain to comfort them and bid them remember that this day of God's mercy was not a day of mourning, but of joy. "This day," they said, "is holy unto our Lord; neither be ye sorry: for the joy of the Lord is your strength."

Thus at last the reproach of Judah was taken away from among the nations, and the land had rest for a season from its troubles.

(4) HOW QUEEN ESTHER SAVED HER PEOPLE.

NOW in these days of the Return from Exile, after the Temple had been built again, and before Ezra and Nehemiah had done their work and set up the walls of Jerusalem, a great danger befell the Jews who still remained in Persia; and from that danger they were saved by the prudence of one wise man and the courage of one brave woman. It fell out in this wise. The Great King, Ahasuerus, whom the Greeks call Xerxes, and whom

they beat at Salamis and Platæa, was reigning over the vast Persian Empire from India to farthest Ethiopia, beyond the Cataracts of the Nile. An hundred and twenty-seven provinces owned him as their lord, and he had vanity enough for them all; for he was a proud man, and a boaster, swift to anger, but fickle, and easily swayed.

In the third year of his reign, he made a great feast to all the princes and notables of his mighty empire. In the gardens of his palace at Susa there was set up a huge pavilion of silk, white and green and blue, over a pavement of many-coloured marble. There the guests reclined upon couches of gold and silver, and drank wine out of golden vessels of all manner of noble design. And in the harem, Vashti, the favourite Queen, gave a like feast to the wives of the King's guests.

Now on the seventh day of the feast, when the King's heart was merry with wine, he bade his seven chamberlains bring Queen Vashti to him, with the royal crown on her head, that all his guests might see her in her royal splendour, and judge how beautiful a woman he had to wife. But Queen Vashti had no mind to be made a public show to gratify a drunkard's whim, and she refused to come. Then King Ahasuerus was hot with anger, not, as he should have been, with himself for his drunken folly, but with his wife for her decent modesty. He called his council to him, and put to them this question of mighty moment—"What shall be done to Queen Vashti, because she has refused to obey the King's command?" The seven counsellors were wise enough to see which way blew the wind of their master's desire, and, moreover, they feared lest Vashti's independence might make their own wives over-bold to question their commands. So Memucan, their spokesman, gave counsel that Vashti should be deposed from her royal state, that so all wives in Persia might learn how needful it was to obey their lords, even when they were drunk. So King Ahasuerus sent out a decree to all the hundred and twenty-seven provinces of his empire, bidding them learn what befell the woman who would not do her husband's bidding, that so every man should be master in his own house. Thus Vashti was deposed, and was well rid of her royal fool; and doubtless every man

in Persia was just as much master in his own house as he was before,—and no more.

Now was this royal weakling left without the chiefest of his playthings, and need was that another should be found to take the place of the deposed Queen. So there were gathered together to the palace at Susa troops of all the fairest maidens of the kingdom, that the King might choose him another wife; and among them there came a Jewish maiden, Hadassah, or Esther, who had been brought up by her uncle Mordecai, after her father and mother had died. Mordecai bade her say naught to any man of her Jewish lineage; but he himself watched day by day before the court of the harem to see what would become of her. Esther was exceeding beautiful, so that she won the hearts of all who looked upon her; and when King Ahasuerus saw her, he thought that there was no woman to be compared to her, and made her his queen in Vashti's room.

And in these days when Esther was newly made queen, Mordecai, in his comings and goings about the palace, heard of a plot against the King's life, laid by two of the royal chamberlains. He discovered it to his niece, and she made it known to the King. When the matter was inquired into, the charge was proved. The two conspirators were crucified, and the story of their plot and its discovery was set down in the royal records.

Now King Ahasuerus had gotten him a new servant, a man of Amalek, Haman by name, the son of Hammedatha; and he raised him to great honour in the land, and made him Grand Vizier, and gave command that all should bow before him. But Mordecai the Jew would not bow before Haman or do him reverence, and the courtier folk who live by the breath of great men's favour told the Grand Vizier of this stubborn Hebrew who would not bow the knee to his greatness. Haman was filled with wrath; but he thought it too small a revenge to lay hands on Mordecai alone. Nothing less than the blood of all the Jews in the empire could wash out the insult which a Jew had put up on this Amalekite's greatness.

For twelve months he nursed his anger, using divination that he might find what day might be most favourable to his vengeance;

and the lot fell luckily on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month Adar. So Haman broached his plot unto the King. "There is a certain people," he said, "scattered abroad through all the provinces of the kingdom. They have their own laws, and they obey not the King's commandments; therefore it is not to the King's profit to suffer them. Give command for their slaughter, and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver into the hands of the King's treasurers." Such a promise readily persuaded the royal fool; and he gave command that the Jews, young and old, women and little children alike, should all be slain on one day. The decree went out post-haste to all the provinces, and the King and his counsellor sat down to make merry: but when the people of Susa heard what the King had commanded, they were in great perplexity.

When Mordecai heard of this decree of wholesale murder, he rent his garments and put on sackcloth, and came even to the King's gate, crying with a loud and bitter cry, so that Esther's maids and chamberlains brought her word of her kinsman's plight. So Esther sent one of her servants to ask of Mordecai what his grievance might be; and Mordecai revealed to her all the plot of Haman against the Jews, and charged her to supplicate the King that he might revoke the bloody decree. Esther was sore perplexed, for the King had not summoned her to him for thirty days, and the law ran that it was death to any one to enter the King's presence unbidden, unless the King stretched out towards him the golden sceptre. Mordecai spake sharply to rouse her. "Think not," he said, "that thou, in the King's palace, shalt escape more than any other of the Jews. If thou art silent at this time, deliverance shall come from another source; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed." "Who knoweth," he ended, "if thou be not come to royal state just for this time of need?"

Esther took her courage in both hands. "Go," she said to Mordecai, "gather together all the Jews that are in Susa, and bid them fast and pray for me without ceasing for three days and nights; and I and my maidens will fast likewise. Then will I go before the King unbidden; and if I perish, I perish."

So on the third day the queen robed her in her royal garments, and went into the presence. At the sight of her the King's heart was glad, he held out towards her the golden sceptre, and she stretched out her hand and touched the top thereof. "What wilt thou, Queen Esther?" said Ahasuerus. "It shall be given unto thee, even unto the half of the kingdom." Then Esther besought him to come that day to a banquet of her own preparing, and to bring with him Haman the Vizier. And when Ahasuerus and Haman sat with Esther at the feast, the King renewed his promise to give her all her heart's desire. Then said Esther, "If I have found favour in the King's sight, let the King and Haman come again tomorrow to my banquet, and I will make known my desire."

Haman went forth from the royal presence swelling with pride at his new favours; but as he went, and all men bowed before him, lo, the stubborn Jew Mordecai neither rose nor moved as the great man passed. So Haman's wrath waxed hotter still; yet he held his peace till he had gotten him home. Then he called for Zeresh, his wife, and for all his friends, and told them of all his honours, and of this new favour granted unto him that he alone should feast, twice together, with the King and Queen. "Yet," he ended, "all this is nothing to me, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the King's gate."

Zeresh was as bitter as her husband. "Cause a gallows to be made," she said, "seventy and five feet in height, and ask the King to hang Mordecai thereon; then go thou in merrily with the King to feast." The thing pleased Haman, and the gallows was set up.

Now it fell out that on that night the King's sleep went from him, and he bade them read to him the records of his reign. They read how Mordecai had revealed the plot of the two chamberlains, and Ahasuerus said, "What honour and dignity were given to Mordecai for this?" Then the King's servants answered, "Nothing hath been done." "Who is in attendance?" said the King. Now Haman had newly come into attendance, with his mind full of his plot to have Mordecai hung upon the gallows; so the chamberlains said, "Haman is in the court." "Let him come

in," said Ahasuerus; and Haman entered, thinking that the hour of his revenge was surely come.

"What shall be done," said Ahasuerus to him, "unto the man whom the King delighteth to honour?" Haman thought within himself, "Whom should the King delight to honour but me?" So he answered, "Thus shall it be done. Let the royal garments be brought, and the royal crown, and the horse that the King is wont to ride, and let them be delivered to one of the most noble princes of the kingdom, and let him array the man whom the King would honour in the royal robes, and set him on the royal steed, and lead him through the streets of the city, and proclaim before him, 'Thus shall it be done to the man whom the King delighteth to honour.'"

"Haste thee, then," said King Ahasuerus to Haman, "do all this, lacking in nothing, to Mordecai the Jew, that sitteth at the King's gate." Snared in his own device, Haman did as he was bidden, and led Mordecai in triumph through the city; then he wrapped his face in his mantle and went to his house, bitter with rage and shame. Once more he told his wife and his friends all that had befallen; and this time they had naught but foreboding of evil. While they were yet talking, came the royal chamberlains to bid him to the banquet.

Ahasuerus, Esther, and Haman sat together at the feast, and once more the King said to the Queen, "What is thy petition, Queen Esther? It shall be granted thee, unto the half of the kingdom. "If I am pleasing to thee, O my King," said Esther, "my petition is that my life and that of my people be spared. For we are sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish." "Who and where is the man," cried the King, "who dares presume in his heart to do such a thing?" "My enemy and adversary," said Esther, "is this wicked Haman."

The King sprang from the table in fierce anger and paced to and fro in the palace garden; and Haman, all his plots fallen in ruins about him, pled for his life with the woman who had outwitted him, and fell down by her couch stretching his hands for mercy. The King came back, and his rage flamed higher still. "What," he shouted, "will he lay hands even on the Queen before my

very face?" The royal chamberlains seized the wretched man and covered his face. One of them spoke up—"Behold, the gallows, seventy and five feet high, which he made for Mordecai, who spoke to save the King, stands before Haman's house." "Hang him thereon," said the King; and so Haman ended.

But his evil-doings could not so easily be undone; for the empire was wide, and the decree for the massacre of the Jews had gone through all the provinces. Therefore letters under the King's seal were sent forth by swift riders bidding the Jews arm themselves and defend their lives against all who should assail them. East and west, north and south the posts went out on camels, horses, or mules, and wherever the letters came the Jews banded themselves together and fought so stoutly that the day that was set for their slaughter became a day of far greater slaughter for their enemies. Therefore the fourteenth day of the month Adar was set apart for all time to be a great feast-day in memory of this deliverance of God's people from their enemies; and because Haman had cast "Pur," that is the lot, to find the lucky day to destroy the Jews, therefore the feast was called the Feast of Purim, the Feast of the Lots.

To Mordecai was given great honour. He was made the first man in the kingdom after King Ahasuerus, and was robed in royal garments of purple and white, with a coronet of gold upon his head. All men rejoiced in his advancement, and through all the empire the Jews had light and gladness, joy and honour.

ESTHER AND AHASUERUS.
(Esther, v, 1.)

Part IX. *Stories of the Poets and Prophets of Israel*

(1) JOB, THE STORY OF A GREAT PROBLEM

ALL through the history of the race, the minds of thoughtful men among God's people were vexed and puzzled by one great problem. Does God always punish evil-doing, and reward righteousness? Or, to put it in another way, if misfortune and sorrow fall upon a man, are we to believe that they have fallen upon him because of his sin, sin perhaps that none knew of, but that God saw? So men strove to believe for long, imagining that they could justify God's dealings as readily, and understand them as simply as a man can judge and understand a merchant's dealings with weight and scale. Gradually they found that it was not so. Sometimes, often indeed, the evil man prospered and knew no misfortune; often the righteous man was stricken to the very dust by blow upon blow. God's ways seemed dark and difficult to understand, and while the faith of some men failed them in the face of the contradictions of life, others tried to reach out to the thought of a God infinitely greater, and a justice and righteousness infinitely more wonderful than they had dreamed of before.

It was one of the latter, who, perhaps in the days of Exile, when the world looked none too bright for God's people, wrote the great poem that we call the Book of Job, creating out of his imagination the figure of a righteous man overwhelmed with a flood of misfortune and sorrows, and arguing, by his mouth and that of his friends, why such things should have been allowed by a righteous God.

In the land of Uz, he said, on the border of the Eastern desert, there dwelled a man named Job. A just man he was, and upright, fearing God, and avoiding evil. God had given him the greatest

of all the blessings coveted by the men of the East, for he had a goodly family of seven sons and three daughters. Moreover he was the greatest flock-master in all that Eastern land, for he had seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, five hundred pair of oxen, and five hundred she-asses, and a great household of servants. Week by week his seven sons held festival with one another, and with their three sisters, each son in his turn providing the feast in his own house; and always when the weekly festival was past, their good father would make offerings and prayers to God, lest his sons should have been careless and forgotten God in their gladness.

Now it fell, on a day when the sons of God came to do homage before their Lord, that Satan, the accusing angel, came also among them. Then said the Lord to the fallen angel, "Whence comest thou?" "From walking up and down in the earth, and going to and fro therein," answered Satan. "Hast thou marked my servant Job," said the Lord, "that there is none to match him in the earth, a good and upright man to his heart's core, fearing God and avoiding evil?" "Fine words," sneered the Accuser. "Is it for nothing that Job fears thee? Hast thou not hedged him about from ill, him, and his house, and all that he hath, and blessed him on every hand? Put forth thine hand now and blast all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face." "Lo!" said the Lord, "all that he hath is in thy power; only put not thine hand upon himself." So Satan went forth from God's presence, to work his will upon Job's fortunes, and to prove him.

There came a day when Job's sons and daughters were holding festival in their eldest brother's house, and Job was ware of a runner hastening towards him with tidings. "The oxen were ploughing," he said, "and the asses feeding beside them, when a troop of Sabean raiders rushed on them and carried them off. The servants they slew with the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell thee."

The words were yet on his lips when there came a second messenger. "God's lightning fell from heaven," he said, "and burned up the sheep and the shepherds; and I alone have escaped to tell thee." He had not finished his tale of disaster when a third ap-

peared. "Three bands of the Chaldeans," he cried, "raided the camels and carried them off, and slew thy servants with the sword; and I alone have escaped to tell thee."

Job's cup of misfortune was not yet full. There came a fourth messenger of evil, with the bitterest tidings of all. "Thy sons and daughters were feasting in their eldest brother's house; a great wind blew from the desert, and struck the four corner-posts of the house, so that it fell upon thy children, and they are dead. I only have escaped to tell thee."

Then Job rose up, rent his garments and shaved his head. He cast himself to the ground before God and worshipped, saying, "Naked came I into the world, and naked shall I leave it: Jehovah gave, Jehovah hath taken away; blessed be the name of Jehovah!" Through all this sore trial, Job sinned not, nor murmured foolishly against God.

Yet his constancy was not enough for the Accuser. The day came round again for the sons of God to enter His presence, and with them came the fallen angel. Then said the Lord to him, as before, "Whence comest thou?" And Satan made answer, "From walking up and down in the earth, and going to and fro therein." "Hast thou marked my servant Job?" said the Lord. "None like him in the earth, steadfast and upright, fearing God and avoiding evil. Yea even now, though thou hast moved me to destroy him without cause, he stands firm in his integrity."

But Satan had still his sneer. "Skin for skin," he said. "All that a man hath will he give for his life. Stretch out Thine hand now, and touch bone and flesh, and he will curse Thee to Thy face." "Lo!" said the Lord, "he is in thine hand: only spare his life." Satan went forth from God's presence, and smote Job with grievous boils from head to foot, so that he sate him down outside his house in the ashes, like an outcast leper. His wife came and looked with bitter scorn upon his patience. "Still steadfast in thine integrity? Curse God and die" she said; for her heart was sore within her. "Nay," answered Job, "thou talkest folly, like a pagan woman. We take good from God's hand; shall we not also take evil?" So still no unrighteous word fell from his lips.

Now Job had three friends, Eliphaz of Teman, Bildad of Shuah,

and Zophar of Naamah, and when they heard of all the evil that had fallen upon him they came, all three together, to mourn with him and to comfort him. As they drew near and saw the evil plight of their friend, they could scarce believe that he whom they saw sitting among the ashes could be the man whom they had known in prosperity and happiness. They rent their garments, and cast dust upon their heads; then they sat down beside him on the ground, and for seven days and seven nights they spake not a word unto him, for they saw that his grief was very great.

Then at last Job opened his mouth, and cursed the day on which he was born, and longed to be at peace in the darkness where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest. Also he marvelled why life should be given to men, seeing that it is full of nothing but trouble and sorrow. But when he spake thus bitterly, the lips of the eldest of his friends, Eliphaz of Teman, were opened, and he rebuked Job, for that he, who had often upheld others in time of trouble, should now be utterly overwhelmed when trouble fell upon himself. Moreover he strove to make Job acknowledge his own blameworthiness, bidding him say if ever he had seen the innocent perish, or the righteous cut off. "They that plough iniquity and sow wickedness," he said, "reap the same."

Bildad also harped upon the same string. "Doth God pervert judgment?" he said. "Or doth the Almighty pervert justice? If thy children sinned against Him, He destroyed them for their transgression. It is the wicked man whose hope is cut off by God. Jehovah will not cast away a perfect man, neither will He help evil-doers." Zophar, too, bade him believe that God was exacting of him less than his iniquity deserved, and counselled him to turn his heart to the Lord and depart from evil, that so his darkness might be turned into noonday. With one voice, these purblind men, who could see nothing but their own fixed ideas, and who thought to measure the Almighty with their little rule, bade their suffering friend see his own wickedness in the sorrow that had come upon him, thinking thus to justify the Judge of all the earth.

But Job would have none of their easy commonplaces, for he knew that his heart was righteous and perfect towards God. He

turned swiftly and sharply, and rent their smug self-righteousness in pieces. "No doubt ye are the people," he cried, "and wisdom shall die with you. Yet I have understanding as well as you. Have not I seen, have not ye seen, how the wicked prosper in their wickedness? Is there not one end to all men? One man dies in ease and quietness, having been happy and prosperous all his days, and another dies in bitterness of soul, never having tasted pleasure; both lie down in the dust, and the worms cover them. God knoweth the way that I take, and, when He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold. My foot hath held His steps, and I have loved His words more than my necessary food. But God hath purposed a thing, and who can turn Him? It is by His will, not by my wickedness, that all this hath come upon me. Would that I had been cut off before this darkness came."

Then all the days that were no more rose up before the anguished mind of Job, and he called to memory the time when the light of God shone on him, when men gave him honour, and princes were silent to hear his counsel, when the poor and needy and the fatherless looked to him for help, and never in vain. "But now," he cried in his bitterness, "I am the song of fools, and their byword, they spare not to spit in my face. God hath become cruel to me, and hath cast me into the mire. Yet let Him weigh me in a fair balance, and He shall know mine integrity."

Then Job's friends ceased to reason with him further, for they saw that he was righteous in his own eyes, and that no words of theirs would make him confess what he did not believe. But there stood by a fourth man, Elihu, the son of Barachel of Buz, and he was angry with Job because he justified himself instead of God, and angrier still with Job's three friends because they were put to silence. So he reasoned with Job of a God who is infinite in power and justice and righteousness, and bade Job humble himself lest he should add rebellion to sin.

Then came there a mighty rushing wind over the place where these men talked of God, and the Almighty spake to Job out of the midst of the wind, bidding him consider all the wonder of His works in the world, and answer whether he could understand the very least of his Creator's doings. How then should he presume to

justify himself or to judge the dealings of One so far above him? And Job answered, "I have uttered that which I understood not—things too wonderful for me, which I knew not. Hitherto, I had heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye hath seen Thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

Then the Lord justified Job in the eyes of his three friends, telling them that Job had spoken more truly of Him than they with all their wisdom. He bade them take seven bullocks and seven rams for a burnt-offering, and go with them to Job, that he might pray to Heaven for the forgiveness of their sin in judging the Almighty by themselves. So they made their offering, and Job prayed for them, and they were forgiven.

Thus the trial of Job passed, and the Lord lifted him up again, and blessed him in his latter days even more than at the beginning. For in the end he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and a thousand pair of oxen, and a thousand she-asses. Seven sons and three daughters were born to him and in all the land there were no women so fair as the daughters of Job, and he named them "Daylight," "Cassia-Sweet," and "Gladdener of Eyes." After all his troubles he lived for another hundred and forty years, even until he had seen his children's children unto the fourth generation. Then at last he died, being old and full of days.

(2) JONAH: THE PARABLE OF GOD'S MERCY

WHEN the Jews came back to Jerusalem from their Exile in Babylon, they had learned one lesson. Idolatry, as their fathers had known it, the worshipping of false gods, they had forsaken for ever. And that was all to the good. But they brought back with them also something that was not so good—a fierce hatred of all the heathen nations, a desire to see them destroyed, and a scornful refusal to believe that God could ever love them, or have mercy upon them. And the strictness

with which Ezra, and his followers, the Scribes, made them keep separate from all the nations caused them to become all the more stubborn in these matters.

But at last God put it into the heart of a wise and gentle Hebrew to feel differently towards the heathen. He could not bear to think of all other nations save his own being cast off by God, and he could not bear to think of his countrymen hating all their fellow men. So he resolved to try if he could not teach them how wrong they were to think so hardly of other men, heathen though they might be, and how merciful and loving God was to all men. How was he to do it? If he had told them the plain truth, they would have mocked him, or perhaps stoned him. But sometimes people will listen to a story, and learn a lesson from it, when they would not listen to the wisest advice. So he put what he wanted to teach them into the form of a story—a parable, such as all the Eastern races love, and such as our Lord Jesus used to tell to His disciples to teach them, only his parable is far longer than any of our Lord's. It tells how a prophet of Israel tried to flee from the duty of preaching to a great heathen city, how he was recalled to his duty, how the heathen repented and God forgave them, and how the prophet was so angry at God for being so merciful that he wished to die. And by this great story, in which the heathen folk appear far gentler, kinder, and really more religious than the Jewish prophet, this man wished to teach his people to think better of their fellow men, and to believe that God could love them and be merciful to them, just as well as if they were Jews.

So when you read this story of Jonah, will you remember that it is not history, but a parable, just like our Lord's parable of the Prodigal Son, and that when Jesus quotes from it, He is using it just as you might quote, say, from Tennyson's "Idylls of the King," and that all the figures in the story really have a meaning, and stand for more than themselves? When the writer tells you of Jonah, who was an old prophet of the Jews, dead hundreds of years before the story was written, he means you to take Jonah just as the picture of God's own hard-hearted people. When he tells you of the great fish that swallowed Jonah, he means the Captivity in Babylon which swallowed up the Jews. When he

pictures Nineveh, the great capital of Assyria (in ruins long before he wrote), he sees in his mind all the heathen nations, whom the Jews hated and God pitied.

To our minds it seems a very roundabout way of teaching people a simple lesson, but it was the only way that seemed possible or safe to the writer. And if you will read his story in the light of what I have told you, I think you will see that there is nothing ridiculous about it, not even about the great fish, at which so many have mocked, but that it is all a wonderfully noble lesson of God's mercy, and of the brotherhood of man, taught in this quaint fashion to a stubborn and self-willed people, who would not have listened to it in any other way.

Now this is the parable of Jonah and God's mercy to Nineveh, written long years after Jonah was in his grave, and Nineveh a heap of ruins; but always true, as long as there shall be men on earth.

God sent a message to the prophet Jonah, saying, "Go to Nineveh, that great city, and rebuke it for its wickedness; for I have heard that it is very wicked." But Jonah did not want to preach to the men of Nineveh, lest God should pardon them; so he fled down to the sea-coast, and there at Joppa he found a west-bound ship sailing for Tarshish, and paid the fare, and went on board. But they had not sailed far before a great storm came down from the hills, and the ship laboured and strained, till the mariners, in terror, prayed, each man to his nation's God (for they were all heathen), and threw over the cargo to lighten the ship. But Jonah was asleep in the waist of the ship.

Then at last the shipmaster roused him, and bade him also call upon his God for help. And they cast lots, to see who had brought this trouble on them all by his wickedness, and the lot fell upon Jonah. So they asked him, saying, "What evil have you done that this storm has followed you? Who are you, and what is your business?" Then Jonah told them who he was, and how he served the God of Israel, and had fled rather than do His will. And the

"CURSE GOD, AND DIE."
(Job, ii, 9.)

sailors asked what they must do to him, in order that God's anger might be turned away; for the storm waxed fiercer and fiercer.

So Jonah told them that they must take him and cast him into the sea, and then the storm would cease. But the seamen would in no wise do this. So they rowed to the last of their strength to bring the ship to land; but it was of no avail. Then in their despair they prayed to God that He would pardon them for what they were about to do, for it was much against their will. *And so Jonah learned that even heathen sailors might be more merciful and more pious than he, a Jew and a servant of God.* Then, all unwillingly, they cast Jonah into the sea; and the sea ceased from her raging.

Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah; and for three days and nights Jonah lay in the belly of the fish. Then he prayed unto God and besought His mercy, and the fish cast up the prophet again upon the dry land.

Then once more God sent His word to Jonah, bidding him go and preach unto the men of Nineveh; and this time Jonah did not refuse, but took his journey unto Assyria. Now so great was the city of Nineveh, that a man might walk for three days before he compassed its walls. So Jonah entered the gates, and began to walk through the streets, and, as he went he cried, "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown." Now when the people and the King of Nineveh heard this warning, the King rose from his throne, and took off his royal robes, and put on clothing of sackcloth, and sat in ashes; and he proclaimed a great fast throughout the city, and commanded that all his people should pray unto God for mercy, and should turn from their wickedness. "For who can tell," said he, "if God will turn and repent, and turn away from His fierce anger, that we perish not?" And when God saw that they turned from wickedness and cried for mercy, He was merciful, and forgave them.

And so Jonah learned that even heathens might be readier to listen to the word of God, and more willing to obey it, than he had been, Hebrew and servant of God though he was.

But the fact that God had shewed mercy to Nineveh made Jonah very angry, for it was just what he had dreaded at the beginning. And in his foolish anger he besought God to let him

die rather than live to see these heathen pardoned. But God only answered him quietly, "Art thou so very angry?"

So Jonah went out and sat down on the east side of the city to wait and watch, hoping that even yet disaster might come. And God made a gourd grow over his head, so that he sat in the comfortable shadow of it, and was glad of the coolness. But the next morning God caused a worm to gnaw the gourd, so that it withered away; and the east wind came fierce and hot, and the burning sun beat down upon the prophet's head, till he fainted, and wished yet once more that he were dead. Then said God again to him, "Art thou so very angry for the gourd?" And Jonah answered "I am very angry, even unto death." And God drove home the lesson which He had prepared. "Thou (that hadst no care for thousands of thy fellow men) carest for a gourd, for which thou hast not laboured, nor hast thou brought it up, a thing that came in a night, and in a night has perished. And shall I not care for Nineveh, the Great City, in which there are more than twelve times ten thousand human beings who know not their right hand from their left, besides much cattle?"

And so Jonah learned that God loves and cares for all men, heathen as well as Hebrew, and for all His dumb creatures also.

But the Jews would not take the Parable of God's mercy to themselves. They put it among their holy books, and read it diligently, and went on hating their neighbours worse than ever; until at last Jesus Christ came to teach us that God is Love, and loves all men, and that He has granted even unto the Gentiles repentance unto life.

Part X. *From the Old to the New*

THE WRESTLE OF HEBREW, GREEK, AND ROMAN FOR GOD'S LAND

IT was told to you in the story of Daniel, how the Great King Nebuchadnezzar had a vision of a mighty image with head of gold, breast and arms of silver, belly and thighs of brass, legs of iron, and feet, part of iron and part of clay, and how Daniel told the King that this image was a prophecy of the empires that should rule the world—first his own, the head of gold, and then empire after empire following one another, until the stone hewn without hands should smite them all to pieces, and become the kingdom that shall know no end.

Even so it befell, for, as you have heard, when Nebuchadnezzar had passed away his golden empire fell before the power of Cyrus the Persian, and it was under Persian rule that all the later events recorded in the Old Testament befell. And the Persians were the silver empire of the great King's dream. Then came the brazen thunderbolt of war, Alexander of Macedon, and in three great battles, at the Granicus, at Issus, and at Arbela, he dashed in pieces all the might of the Persian Empire, and set up a kingdom of his own that stretched from Macedon to the Indus. During his warfare with the Persians, while he was besieging Tyre, he sent messengers to the Jewish High Priest at Jerusalem asking for auxiliaries and provisions; but the High Priest bravely answered that his oath of fealty to the Persian King forbade such a thing.

Therefore Alexander swore vengeance, and when he had taken both Tyre and Gaza, he marched against Jerusalem; but when he came in sight of the Holy City, he was met by a strange procession. At its head was Jaddua the High Priest, in his robes of office, behind him came the rest of the priests, in their priestly

garments, and the whole population of the city, clad in white, followed in the rear. Wonder-struck at the sight, Alexander bowed in adoration before the unspeakable name inscribed on the High Priest's mitre. Parmenio, one of his favourite generals, asked him how it was that he, whom all men worshipped, should himself worship a Jewish priest. "I worship not him," said the Conqueror, "but this God Whose priest he is. For long ago, in Macedonia, I saw in my dreams such an one, so clothed, who bade me undertake the conquest of Persia, and succeed."

It may be only a story, but certain at least it is that the Jews were treated kindly and humanely by the great soldier, and that, in the early days, at all events, the change from the silver to the brazen empire was no disadvantage to them. But ere long Alexander died at Babylon in the mid-time of his days, and his vast empire was divided among the chiefest of the generals who had followed his banner. Three hundred years before the coming of our Lord there were five kings reigning over the fragments of the great inheritance,—Seleucus was lord of Babylon; Antigonus, of Phrygia; Ptolemy Lagi, of Egypt; Lysimachus, of Thrace; and Bithynia and Cassander, of Macedonia and Greece.

Soon the five quarrelled among themselves over their shares; and at last, when Antigonus had been defeated and slain by his rivals at Ipsus, Palestine fell into the hands of Ptolemy, the Greek, King of Egypt, under whose rule, and that of his successors, it remained for a century. It was a time of comparative peace and happiness for God's people. Both in Palestine and in Egypt, to which land great numbers of the Jews had emigrated, the Ptolemies showed favour and kindness to them, and indeed it was in the reign, and, as tradition says, at the instance of King Ptolemy the Second, that the great Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, which we know as the Septuagint, was made at Alexandria by the seventy-two Hebrew scholars from whose number it derives its name. Later in this period, and when its early promise was growing clouded, there was written also a book which, though we do not reckon it as one of the books of the Bible, has always been held in high reverence. This is the book which the Western Church calls by the name of Ecclesiasticus, and the Eastern by

JONAH CAST INTO THE SEA.
(Jonah, i, 15.)

the title of "The Wisdom of Jesus, the Son of Sirach." It is a manual of conduct, akin in style to the Books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, and scarcely inferior to them in many respects; and it was doubtless from its long eulogium of the historic heroes of Israel that the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews took the idea of his great eleventh chapter on the heroes of faith.

By the beginning of the second century before Christ, however, the hold of the Egyptian kings on Palestine was slackening, and finally the Holy Land passed by treaty to the family of Antiochus III, King of Syria. Under the successors of this king, and particularly under Antiochus IV, Epiphanes, the Jews passed through one of the darkest, and also one of the most heroic and glorious, periods of their history. This king, whose name "Epiphanes," "The Illustrious," was soon changed by his subjects into "Epimanes," "The Madman," conceived the idea of setting up, in all his dominion, the faith of ancient Greece as the state religion. The Jews met the attempt with a determined opposition, and their stubbornness created in the mind of Antiochus a rooted hatred of the whole nation. The Temple was desecrated, Jerusalem was once and again given over to sack and slaughter, and the worship of Jehovah was absolutely forbidden. Finally the Temple was dedicated anew to Jupiter, and in the year 168 B. C., the first heathen sacrifice was offered upon the great altar of burnt-offering, before a statue of the god of Olympus.

Many of the Jews, of course, conformed to heathen practices in order to save their lives; but the best men and women of Israel, the flower of the race, were ready to die rather than commit apostacy from the faith of their fathers. Many laid down their lives as martyrs, and a large section of the nation entered into a solemn league to maintain their ancient institutions. Those who thus vowed themselves to Jehovah's cause, the Covenanters of their time, were known as the *Chasidim*, or pious ones. Later their name was changed to *Pharisees*, and it is strange to think that the class which was the most bitter opponent of the Saviour had its origin in a most noble and genuine devotion to the cause of God. In its origin, the covenant of the Chasidim was a purely religious thing, and those who had adhered to it had no intention of using force to

maintain their cause. But gradually, as invariably happens in such cases, they found that they must choose between self-defense and extermination, and took up arms in defence of their faith. Their action led to one of the most glorious episodes of Jewish history, the War of Independence, waged by the great soldier Judas Maccabæus, and his heroic brethren, Jonathan and Simon.

In the little town of Modein, some twenty miles from Jerusalem, dwelt an aged priest named Mattathias, with his five sons. It fell out that Apelles, the agent of Antiochus in his persecution of the Jewish faith, came to Modein, and commanded Mattathias to offer sacrifice in heathen form. The old priest stoutly refused to yield, and when an apostate Jew approached the altar with an offering, Mattathias rushed forward, slew both him and the King's commissioner, and tore down the altar. This outburst was the signal for rebellion all over the land, and the aged priest and his sons soon found themselves at the head of a large band of insurgents, who carried on a sharp guerilla warfare against the Greek oppressors. Ere long Mattathias sank under the burden of years and hardships; but his third son Judas, surnamed Maccabæus, or the Hammerer, took up the banner of freedom from the failing hands of His father, and proved himself a hero worthy of the greatest traditions of Israel. General after general, and host after host of the Greek oppressor came against him, only to find that they had to deal with a foe whose courage and whose generalship made him invincible. Apollonius was defeated and slain near Samaria, Seron at Beth-horon, Ptolemy, Nicanor, and Gorgias, with a huge army, absolutely crushed at Emmaus by a paltry three thousand Jews under Judas; and when Lysias, the governor of the province, gathered an army of sixty-five thousand men to crush the rebels by sheer force of numbers, Judas met him at Bethzur, between Jerusalem and Hebron, and swept his mighty host away, slaying five thousand of the persecutors. This crowning mercy was followed by the liberation of Jerusalem, and the cleansing and rededication of the desecrated Temple.

The insurgent Jews had shown that they were not to be overthrown by force of arms, and after the death of Antiochus, the tyrant, in 164 B. C., the Syrian governor Lysias was forced to

concede to them full religious liberty. Judas, however, was determined to throw off the Syrian yoke altogether, and with this end in view, he sent ambassadors to Rome to endeavour to enlist on his side the mightiest of earthly powers. But ere the strength of Rome could be brought to bear, the Jewish hero had fought his last gallant fight. At Eleasa, with a small force of three thousand men, he met the great army of Demetrius, the new King of Syria. More than two thousand of his little force deserted him when they realized the fearful odds against them, and Judas was left with a pitiful eight hundred men to face the whole might of Syria. With this gallant handful, the Jewish leader maintained a desperate battle from morning till night; but at last the heroic leader was slain and his little force scattered. Never probably, in all the history of the world, did the leader of a forlorn hope accomplish so much with such paltry resources as did Judas the Hammerer.

His brother Jonathan succeeded him in the leadership, won many successes, and was established as High Priest; but he was captured by treachery, and finally murdered. Of the five noble sons of Mattathias, Simon was now the only survivor; and he conducted the struggle with such wisdom and valour that, in the year 143 B. C., the Jewish nation actually regained its full independence and Simon was chosen High Priest and Governor of the people. His brief reign of less than eight years was the golden age of later Jewish history. Everywhere there was peace and prosperity, the Law of God was carefully observed, and all unrighteousness was put down with a strong hand. The Temple and its services were restored to their ancient splendour, so that it seemed as though the great days of David and Solomon had returned. But Simon was destined to share the fate of his gallant brothers. Invited to a banquet at the castle of Dok by Ptolemy, the governor of Jericho, he was there treacherously murdered.

For more than seventy years his descendants, who are known as the Asmonæan line, held a troubled sovereignty in the land; but their dissensions brought upon the scene a new power, and the giant shadow of Rome lies henceforth across Palestine. In B. C. 63 the Roman general Pompeius, whom we know as Pompey, stormed Jerusalem, slaughtered twelve thousand Jews, and desecrated the

Temple by forcing his way into the Holy of Holies. At one blow all the fabric of Jewish independence, so laboriously and heroically built up by the Maccabees, fell in ruins, never to rise again. Henceforth Palestine was but an insignificant fragment of the vast Roman Empire.

The internal strifes between the princes of the Asmonæan line, which had caused the interference of Rome, had been skilfully used by an Edomite adventurer named Antipater for the advancement of his own interests, and when Palestine fell into the hands of the Romans, the Edomite succeeded in so ingratiating himself with Cæsar, who was now at the height of his power, that he was at last appointed Procurator of Judea, including Samaria and Galilee. His murder in 43 B. C. only brought to the front his son, famous, or infamous, in history as Herod the Great, whose reign of thirty-three years, marked, as few reigns have ever been, by "treason, stratagems, and spoils," concerns us chiefly for this, that it was in his last days, when the fierce old tyrant, glutted with the blood of his nearest and dearest, racked with remorse, and tortured with jealous fears, was gradually sinking into his dishonoured grave, that there was born, in Bethlehem of Judea, the last and mightiest Prince of the house of David, the Saviour of the world.

THE NATIVITY.

BOOK II
THE NEW TESTAMENT

Part I. *Stories of the Birth and Childhood of Jesus*

(1) THE MESSAGE OF GABRIEL

IN these dark days when Herod, misnamed "the Great," was reigning in Palestine, there dwelt in a little town in Judea a priest named Zacharias, with his wife Elizabeth. Good and pious souls they were, both of them, and faithful to all God's commandments; but their lives were lonely, for no child had been born to them, and old age was beginning to creep upon them. Now the time came round for Zacharias to take his turn of service, like the other priests, at the great Temple in Jerusalem, and at the hour of the morning sacrifice he went into the Holy Place to sprinkle incense upon the fire that burned on the golden altar, in the light of the seven-branched candlestick. In the court without, the great multitude of worshippers waited, while within, behind the embroidered curtain, Zacharias strewed the incense upon the flames, and the sweet-scented smoke of the offering curled slowly upwards to the roof.

Suddenly through the thin blue haze, Zacharias saw the form of a great angel standing by the right side of the golden altar. Fear and trembling came upon him at the sight; but, as he shook with dread, the strange visitant spoke to him, "Fear not, Zacharias," he said, "thy prayer is heard; thy wife Elizabeth shall bear a son, whose name shall be John. Joy and gladness shall he bring to thee; and many shall rejoice because of his birth, for he shall be great in God's sight, and the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him. Like a new Elijah he shall turn men's hearts to their God, and make ready a people for the Lord." "How shall I believe it," said Zacharias, doubting, "for my wife and I both grow old?" More sternly the angel spoke to him again—"I am Gabriel, who stand ever before God's face; and I am sent to tell thee these glad

tidings. And lo! because thou hast not believed, thy speech shall be taken from thee, until the time when my words are fulfilled."

Outside in the court of the Temple the people waited, wondering what should keep the priest so long. Then the broidered curtain was drawn aside, and Zacharias came forth. Silently he lifted his hand in blessing, and they saw that his lips were sealed and that some wondrous vision had appeared to him behind the veil. Dumbly he went about his priestly duties for the appointed seven days, and then got him back to his quiet home.

Six months came and went, and Elizabeth knew that the angel's promise would soon be fulfilled, when once more the great angel Gabriel was sent forth with a message from God. Far in the north of Palestine in the village of Nazareth which nestles among the hills of Galilee, there dwelt a young maiden named Mary. She was cousin to Elizabeth, and was betrothed to Joseph, who, though he were but a carpenter, was yet of the royal line of David. To her also, as to Zacharias, there came the vision of God's mighty messenger. "Hail, thou that art greatly graced," he said, "the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women." And when Mary's heart was troubled, and she wondered what so strange a greeting might mean, Gabriel spoke again. "Fear not, Mary; for thou hast found favour with God. Behold, a son shall be born of thee, and thou shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God shall give to him the throne of his father David; and of his kingdom there shall never be an end."

"How shall this be?" said Mary, wondering; and Gabriel answered her, "The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore that holy child which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. Thy cousin Elizabeth—she also expects a son—for with God nothing shall be impossible." Mary bowed her head. "Behold, the handmaid of the Lord," she said humbly, "be it with me according to thy word." And the angel vanished from her sight.

Mary had to tell her wondrous news to someone, and to whom so fittingly as to her good cousin, whose name was linked with her own in Gabriel's message; so she set out and travelled to the

village of Zacharias and Elizabeth, among the Judean hills. But there was no need to tell her story. At the sound of her voice Elizabeth clasped her in her arms. "Blessed art thou among women," she cried. "Whence such an honour to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" Then the Spirit of a great joy came upon Mary, and her answer shaped itself into song:

"My soul doth magnify the Lord,
And my Spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.
For He hath regarded the low estate of His handmaiden;
For, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed."

So there was joy in the quiet home, and for three months the two cousins dwelt together, and held converse about the wonders that should befall them.

Then Elizabeth's son was born, and all her friends and neighbours rejoiced with her in God's great goodness. On the eighth day, as the custom was, they were all gathered to the feast of the child's circumcision, when his name should be given to him; and they would have called him Zacharias after his father. "Not so," said Elizabeth, "he shall be called John." "Nay," said the neighbours, "none of thy friends has ever borne that name." They turned to Zacharias and asked him by signs what his son's name should be; and the dumb priest wrote on his writing tablet, "His name is John." In that moment his lips were opened again, and he gave thanks to God. And all who heard of it were filled with wonder. "What shall this child be hereafter?" they said one to another.

But Zacharias, as he looked on the face of his son, was filled with a prophet's joy at the vision of the future. "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel," he cried, "for He hath visited and redeemed His people. And thou, child, shalt be called the Prophet of the Highest; for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord, to prepare His ways." So the child grew. Strong and high of spirit he was, and ever he loved to be alone in the desert solitudes, until the day when he came forth as God's messenger to Israel.

(2) "PEACE ON EARTH, GOODWILL TOWARDS MEN"

MEANWHILE Mary had been wedded to Joseph, and God had taught her husband the great secret that his wife would have a child who should not be his son, but God's gift to the world. Now at this time it fell out that Augustus, the Roman Emperor, sent forth a decree that a census was to be taken of all the people in his mighty empire. Each household was to be registered in its own native village; and so, all over the empire, people who had settled in other towns and villages were travelling back to their old homes for enrolment.

Since Joseph was of the house of David, he and Mary had to journey to Bethlehem from Nazareth; so they travelled southwards over the crowded, dusty roads, till at last, when Mary was ready to faint with weariness, they saw in the evening light the walls and house-tops of the little hill town. Thankfully they crept up to the gate of the caravanserai, hoping to find rest, and a little comfort for Mary in her hour of need. But all the world was travelling, and the little shelters round the open courtyard of the inn were crowded already with luckier wayfarers. There was no time to pick and choose, and Joseph had to find shelter for his wife somewhere, be the place what it might. There was a cattle shed, with its rack and manger, close at hand, and straw to lie down upon. So the weary pair carried their little belongings to that humble lodging, thankful to rest, even if it were among cattle. And there, in the darkness of the night, with the dumb beasts standing around, Mary's son was born, and laid in the manger—he who was the Son of the Highest and the Saviour and King of the world—a strange welcome for the newborn King!

Out on the hillside beyond the town walls shepherds were keeping watch over their flocks that night, as David had often done long ago in his happy boyhood. Suddenly the darkness was cleft by a beam of light from heaven, and down its golden radiance there came an angel of the Lord, till he stood by their side, a

wondrous, shining figure. Their hearts stood still with fear; but the awful presence spoke to them quietly and reassuringly—"Fear not; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the City of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you: ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger."

The heavenly voice was silent again; but in a moment the whole sky was filled with light and sound, and a great choir of angels sang praise to God—"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill towards men."

The echoes of the angels' song died away, and darkness came down once more upon the wondering shepherds. "Let us now go unto Bethlehem," they said one to another, "and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us." With eager steps they hastened into the village, and there, in the cattle shed of the inn, they found Mary and Joseph, and the newborn King cradled in a manger. Spite of the contrast between what they saw, and the Kingship that they looked for, they doubted nothing of the angel's message, but told abroad all that they had heard concerning the child, so that all men marvelled.

But Mary stored all these things within her heart, and would often muse over them and wonder. And when the child was eight days old, Joseph and Mary named him as the angel had bidden them before his birth—"Jesus," which means "Saviour."

(3) THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM

FORTY days after the birth of her little son, Mary brought the child Jesus up to the Temple, that he might be presented before the Lord, and that God's right in him might be acknowledged by the payment of five silver shekels. For such was the law in Israel, that for every first-born son this payment should be made. Mary herself also had to make her thank-offering; and because she and her husband were poor she

could only bring with her the smallest offering that the law allowed—a pair of turtle-doves. The little family was still dwelling in Bethlehem, and from Bethlehem to Jerusalem it is but a little way, no more than six miles. So Mary carried her little son in her arms, and brought him to the top of the stairway of fifteen steps that led to the priests' enclosure into which no woman might enter; and there she waited till she should be sprinkled with the blood of her sacrifice, as the law enjoined.

Now in those days there lived in Jerusalem an ancient man named Simeon. A good and holy man he was, full of God's spirit, and ever hoping and praying for the deliverance of Israel; and God had told him that he should not die until he had seen the Lord's Anointed. Many a day he had come to the Temple with his heart full of an unuttered hope that this day he might see the desire of his heart fulfilled. But this day God's spirit told him that the hour was nigh; and when he saw the young mother standing, with her child in her arms, he knew in a moment that he stood before the world's Redeemer.

Stepping to Mary's side, the old white-haired saint gently took the child Jesus in his arms, and poured out his soul in praise to God. "Lord," he said, "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word; for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel."

Joseph and Mary stood by, marvelling at the words of the ancient saint. Simeon turned to them, and blessed them, and to Mary he said, "Lo, this child is given to prove the hearts of many in Israel; by him many shall fall, and many shall rise. And by him a sword shall pierce through thine own soul also."

While he was yet speaking, there came into the Temple an aged woman, named Anna, a holy prophetess eighty and four years old, who spent her days in the Temple, serving God with prayer and fasting. As soon as she saw Simeon with the babe in his arms, she, too, gave thanks to the Lord, and, going forth from God's House, she spake of the Child Redeemer to all in Jerusalem who longed for the deliverance of Israel.

Not in Jerusalem or Palestine alone, but all over the world

COMING OF THE WISE MEN.

men's hearts were longing for and expecting a Deliverer. In far Chaldea, the star-gazers of that ancient land of wisdom searched the vault of heaven night by night for some starry sign that should tell them of the coming of Him who was the Desire of all Nations; and at last the sign was given. One day there came to Jerusalem from over the Eastern desert a company of grave and reverend men, bearing with them on their camels costly gifts as if for a king. As they passed the eastward gate of the city they spake to the captain of the guard. "Where is he that is born King of the Jews?" they said. "For we have seen his star in the East, and are come to worship him." Ere long the report of their coming and of their strange question reached the ears of Herod the King, and the grim old tyrant trembled with wrath and fear at the thought of another king in Israel; and all Jerusalem, knowing what Herod's fear and anger could mean, was troubled with him.

Swiftly the King sent for the chief priests and learned men of the land. "Tell me," he said, "where your Christ shall be born." "In Bethlehem of Judea," they answered, "for thus spake the prophet Micah in days of old: 'And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda; for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule My people Israel.'" Then the wily old tyrant caused them to bring the wise men from the East in secret to his palace, and earnestly questioned them as to when the star appeared. "Go ye to Bethlehem," he said, when he had learned all they had to tell. "Search carefully for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I also may come and worship him." But in his black heart was nothing but the thought of murder.

Thinking no evil, the wise men took their journey southwards to Bethlehem; and lo! as they went, the star which they had seen in the east seemed to shine along their path, until its light fell upon the humble dwelling where the child Jesus lay. At the sight of it, their hearts were filled with joy. Entering the house they saw the child in Mary's arms, and bending low before him, they did him reverence; then opening their treasures, brought so far across the wilds, they brought forth costly gifts—gold, and frank-

incense, and myrrh—and laid them at his feet. And in after days men saw in these three gifts the signs of the Redeemer's nature and his sacrifice—his kingly state, his divine nature, his human agony. "O King," they said,

O King, the gold;
O Man, the myrrh;
O God, accept the incense!"

Then, being warned by God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, the wise men turned their camels' heads homewards, and departed into their own country by another way.

That night, after the Magi had vanished over the hills, Joseph was awakened out of sleep by an angel of the Lord. "Arise," he said, "and take the young child and his mother; flee into Egypt and dwell there till I bid thee return; for Herod will seek the young child to slay him." Swiftly and silently Joseph aroused Mary, and they two made all things ready for their hurried flight. The ass was saddled, and Mary mounted it, with the sleeping babe in her arms; and with Joseph leading, the little household slipped quietly out of the slumbering town, and took the long road southwards under the twinkling stars. Day after day they journeyed southwards across the great desert until at last they passed the frontier of the ancient Land of Bondage, and found safety and a home for a while in one of the cities of the Nile Valley.

In Jerusalem Herod waited eagerly for the return of the Magi, gloating over the thought of how he would make a speedy end of the claims of this newborn King; but one day passed, and another, and another, till the old tyrant saw that he, who had mocked the reverence of these men from the East, had himself been mocked by them. His cruel heart swelled with fierce anger. This time he would make sure work. So he sent forth a troop of his guard to Bethlehem, and there they sought out and slew every child of two years old or less in the town and the country round about. Far and wide that day there echoed over the hills the sound of bitter, hopeless weeping; for everywhere mothers were mourning for their little ones untimely slain.

Ere long the savage old King himself passed away to his judg-

ment, maddened by remorse for his unnumbered crimes. When he was dead and gone, God's angel spake once more in a dream to Joseph in Egypt. "Arise," he said, "and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel; for they are dead which sought the young child's life." So once again the husband and wife, with the little child, travelled the long road, and came into Palestine; but not to return to Bethlehem. For Herod's evil son Archelaus was reigning in his father's room; therefore Joseph led Mary and Jesus northwards into Galilee, back to the old home at Nazareth, and there they settled down quietly among their own people.

(4) "WIST YE NOT THAT I MUST BE IN MY FATHER'S HOUSE?"

UIETLY the years passed on in the little home among the Galilean hills. The child Jesus grew and throve and became fair and wise. God's grace rested upon him and was seen in all his actions.

In the after years there grew up around these early days of the Redeemer's life a wondrous crop of legends, telling of his wisdom and power, and of the wonderful works that he wrought even while yet a child. But of all these, some are foolish, and some are false, and none is certainly true. Only one thing has been told us of his childhood by the holy men who wrote the life of their Master, and it happened in this wise.

Year by year, when the springtime came round and all the land was bright with flowers, Joseph and Mary were wont to travel up to Jerusalem, with the other pious Jews of their neighbourhood, to keep the great Passover Feast. Jesus was now twelve years old, and the time had come when he was counted a man, and was allowed to take his part in the feast. So this year he went with his parents. All the roads leading to Jerusalem were thronged with joyful companies of pilgrims, who marched by day singing "The Songs of Ascents," as they called the Psalms from 120 to 134, and camping at night by the wayside under the stars. So for the first

time since he had been taken to the Temple in Mary's arms, the boy saw, from the hills that girdle Jerusalem, the mighty walls and towers of the Holy City, and high over all the splendour of the Temple, as Herod had rebuilt it, glittering with marble and gold.

You can imagine how swiftly the days of the feast seemed to the eager boy to pass, and how his clear eyes took in all that was around him, so new, and yet so familiar. At last the day came for them to set out again for Galilee, and Joseph and Mary turned homewards; but Jesus lingered behind in the city. At first his parents scarcely missed him. He was not with them, but they felt sure that he was with some of their friends from Nazareth, and would rejoin them at their first resting-place. The evening shadows fell, and the wayfarers made ready to camp for the night; but there was no sign of Jesus anywhere. Anxiously Joseph and Mary searched for him among all their friends, but in vain. With heavy hearts they turned their backs upon the merry camp and the twinkling camp-fires, and stumbled back through the gathering darkness to the city, calling in vain for the boy as they hastened onwards, a great dread and sorrow gnawing at their hearts.

For three days, through the crowded streets of the busy city, they hurried hither and thither, eagerly questioning all the Galileans whom they met, and scanning every youthful face they saw. At last hope was almost dead, when it occurred to them to search the Temple courts. There, under the great pillared porticoes that ran round the courts and gave a grateful shade from the sun, the wise men of Jerusalem were wont to meet and debate questions of religion and of the Law of Moses, while crowds gathered around to hear the keen questions and the subtle answers of the famous Rabbis. And there they found the boy Jesus, sitting on the ground before a row of grave and reverend fathers, listening to what they had to say, and questioning them in his turn, while a wondering crowd stood around him, amazed at his wisdom and his ready answers.

Between relief and vexation, Mary spoke sharply to him. "My son," she said, "why hast thou treated us like this? Lo, thy father and I have been seeking thee in sorrow." But Jesus turned to his mother, and spake a word that then she could not understand.

JESUS AMONG THE DOCTORS.
(Luke, ii, 46.)

"Why dost thou seek me?" he said. "Did you not know that I must be in my Father's House?" And therewith he went back with them to Nazareth, the same loving, obedient son as he had been before; only Mary had got a glimpse of something great and mysterious in her boy, and though she could not understand it, she kept the memory of it in her heart.

So for eighteen years more Jesus dwelled at Nazareth; and of these years of toil and obedience naught has been told.

Part II. *Stories of the Early Work of Jesus*

(1) HOW JOHN BAPTISED HIS SAVIOUR

IT was the fifteenth year of the reign of the cruel and gloomy Roman Emperor Tiberius: Pontius Pilate was ruling Judea for Rome, and Herod Antipas, another of the evil Edomite brood, was the puppet King of Galilee, when Palestine was startled by the coming of a mighty prophet. For many and many a year, since Malachi had spoken to the men of the Restoration, the voice of prophecy had been silent; but this new preacher brought back to men's minds all that they had heard of such fearless servants of the Lord as Elijah and Amos. He came out of the wilderness, haggard, and lean, and tanned, his hair was unshorn and matted, his garment was a rough cloak of camel's hair, belted with a leathern girdle; he scorned the foods and wines of the town-dwellers, and ate nothing but dried locusts and the honey of the wild bee. His message was as stern and uncourtly as his appearance. "Repent ye," he cried unceasingly as he journeyed through the land, "Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." It was John, the son of Zacharias, coming forth out of the wilderness to prepare the way of the Lord.

The new prophet went down to the banks of Jordan, and the whole nation almost, it seemed, followed him, to listen to his preaching, to confess their sins, and to be baptised of him in the sacred river. Never had such a voice been heard, and the very teachers of religion left their parchments and their wordy wrangles, and came with the motley throng of merchants, soldiers, tax-gatherers, down to the Jordan fords, to hear of sin and repentance and cleansing. It was a new sensation to hear a prophet who feared none and spared none, and whose words were like lightning flashes.

Stern to all, he was sternest to the men who should have taught the nation to know God, and had not done it. Turning his burning eyes upon Pharisee and Sadducee, the righteous men, and the enlightened, as they held themselves, he spake to them as they had never been spoken to. "Brood of vipers," he cried, "who hath warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Bring forth fruits worthy of repentance! Children of Abraham, ye call yourselves! I tell you God can raise up better children of Abraham than you out of these stones. Take heed; for already the axe is being laid to the root of the tree, and the branch that bears no good fruit shall be hewn down and cast into the fire."

He had his home-thrust for everybody. "What shall we do then?" asked the common people. "Be kindly," he said, "share your abundance with the needy—the man with two cloaks, let him give to the man that has none." "Master," said the tax-gatherers who ground the face of the nation with their merciless claims, "master, what shall we do?"

John probed the sore at once. "Exact no more than that which is appointed you"—the last thing a tax-gatherer dreamed of. "What shall we do?" asked Herod's turbulent, half-disciplined soldiers, accustomed to free quarters and plunder. "Do violence to no man," he said, "neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages."

Men began to wonder if this fearless prophet might not be the long-expected Messiah; but John answered their unspoken thought at once. "I baptise indeed with water," he said, "but one mightier than I is coming. Ay, though ye know it not, he is standing among you now, whose sandal-thong I am not worthy to untie. He shall baptise you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. In his hand he holds the winnowing fan to sift the wheat from the chaff of the threshing-floor. The wheat he shall gather into his storehouse, but the chaff he shall burn with fire unquenchable."

Even the Council of the Seventy at Jerusalem was disturbed. They sent priests and Levites to him to question him as to himself and his work. "Nay," he said, "I am not the Messiah." "Art thou Elijah then?" "I am not." "Art thou the prophet foretold long since?" "No," he said. "Who art thou then?" they cried,

"for we must give an answer to them that sent us. What hast thou to say of thyself?" Then John answered them solemnly in the words of Isaiah, "I am the Voice of one crying in the wilderness—'Make straight the way of the Lord!'"

Then one day there came to Jordan a young working man, a carpenter from Galilee, seeking baptism; and when John looked on his cousin's face, he knew Who was standing before him. "I have need to be baptised of Thee," he said, "and comest Thou to me?" "Let it be so now," said Jesus quietly, "for so it becomes us to fulfil all righteousness;" and John forbade him no longer. And as Jesus came up out of the water, the heavens opened above his head, and John, wondering, saw God's Spirit, in the form of a dove, alighting on his Saviour's head; and a voice sounded from heaven—"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

(2) HOW JESUS WAS PROVED

NOW Jesus had been set apart for his life-work by the baptism of John; but before he went out to face the world he was still to be proved. He left the banks of Jordan, and the thronging crowds that gathered about John, and, with the voice of God commanding him, he turned eastwards to the barren wilderness and the iron mountains beyond the Jordan gorge. There for forty days and nights he fasted,and thought, and prayed. By night the chilling winds and frosts of those bleak uplands withered him, and the cold moon looking down upon his lonely vigil showed him gaunt forms of lion and hyena and jackal slinking around, their fierce eyes gleaming through the darkness. By day the pitiless sun beat down upon him, and the heat was doubled by the cruel rocks around. Always there was about him the haunting sense of an evil presence that would fain harm him either in his soul or in his work.

At last when the forty days were over, and Jesus was faint and

"PREPARE YE THE WAY OF THE LORD."
(Matthew, iii, 3.)

weary with hunger, the evil presence made itself heard. Whether he saw his Tempter or no, we cannot tell; but a mocking voice whispered in his ear—"If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." "It is written," answered Jesus, "'Man' shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God's mouth." Then in spirit he was rapt away to the Holy City, and from the giddy height of one of the golden pinnacles of the Temple, he looked down upon the narrow, crowded streets, and the wide courts of God's House, and the deep gash of the Tyropoeon Valley far below. "If thou be the Son of God," came the wicked whisper again, "cast thyself down; for it is written, 'He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.'" "Again it is written," said Jesus calmly, 'Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.'"

Once more he was swept in a moment to the peak of a great mountain, and like Moses on Pisgah, he saw far-stretching beneath his feet all the kingdoms of the world, with their glitter and their glory. "All these will I give thee," said the voice again, "if thou wilt fall down and worship me." "Get thee hence, Satan," said the Saviour, "for it is written, 'Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.'" Baffled and humiliated the tempter left him for a time, and in the great silence of the desert angels came from heaven and ministered to his needs.

(3) THE YOUNG LEADER AND HIS FRIENDS

TIRED and triumphant, Jesus returned from the desert solitude to Jordan, where the multitude still gathered around the Baptist. John was eagerly waiting for the man on whom, in his presence, Heaven had set its seal, and as he saw the figure of his kinsman drawing near, he cried, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. This is He of whom I said, 'After me cometh one greater

than I.' I knew him not, but God's spirit, coming down from heaven like a dove, rested upon him; and I saw, and now I proclaim that this is the Son of God."

On the morrow John stood, with two of his disciples, by the river, and Jesus passed by. "See!" said the Baptist to the young men. "The Lamb of God!" Forthwith the two left John, and went after Jesus. Hearing their footsteps, he turned and met them. "What seek ye?" he said. "Master, where dwellest thou?" they answered. "Come and see," he said, and led them to the little shelter by the river-side where he was camping. It was four hours after noonday when they met with him, and the rest of that day they three spent in converse about the kingdom of God. These two disciples of John, who were also the first friends of Jesus, were fishers from the Sea of Galilee, Andrew and John by name. Both of them sought their friends to tell them of the new teacher, and Andrew quickly found his brother Simon. "We have found the Messiah!" he said to him, and so led him to Jesus. Jesus looked on the sturdy figure, and read all the strength beneath the impulsive waywardness of the man. "Thou art Simon, the son of Jona," he said, "thou shalt be called 'Cephas,' 'the rock.'" And it is by the Greek word for that name—"Petros," "Peter," that Simon ever since has been known.

Perhaps it was that night that Jesus saw in vision a man kneeling under the shade of a fig-tree, and praying earnestly to God, and foresaw a day when he and this unknown man of prayer should meet. On the next day he was minded to leave the Jordan Valley and go back to Galilee, and it so fell out that he met with another Galilean, Philip, a man from the same fishing town of Bethsaida where Andrew and Peter dwelt, and him he summoned to go with him. As they travelled northwards, Philip had the fortune to encounter a man of his acquaintance, Nathanael, who was known also as Bartholomew, because his father's name was Tolmai. He was of the town of Cana in Galilee, and was a good man and true. To him said Philip, "We have found the man of whom Moses and the prophets did write—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." Now Nazareth had but an ill repute among the towns of Galilee, and Nathanael, a Galilean, knew it. "Can there

any good thing come out of Nazareth?" he said. Philip gave him the best answer—"Come and see!"

Jesus was standing by the wayside with Andrew and Peter and John, when these two drew near, and looking on Nathanael, he said, "Behold, a true Israelite, in whom is no deceit." Nathanael was amazed. "How dost thou know me?" he said. "Before Philip called thee," answered Jesus, "when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee." Nathanael's open mind was satisfied at once. "Master," he said, "thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel!" "Dost thou believe," said Jesus, "because I said, 'I saw thee under the fig-tree?' Thou shalt see greater things than this. Truly in the days to come ye shall see heaven opened, and God's angels ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

So the new teacher drew to him his first five disciples. Yet for a time, though they met and talked with Jesus, and looked to him as their Master, they did not break with their old lives. Andrew and Peter and John, who were fishers, went back for a while to their old calling, and, no doubt, Philip and Nathanael also to theirs. The time for them to leave all and follow Jesus came later, and in this fashion. It happened that Jesus was preaching to the people by the side of the Sea of Galilee, and so great a crowd had gathered that they pressed close upon him, and many could neither hear nor see. He looked round for some means to win clear of the press, so that all might hear his voice; and there, close at hand on the beach, lay two fishing boats belonging to Simon and John and their brothers. Beside the boats, the fishermen were washing their nets, after a fruitless night of toil. Calling Simon to him, he bade him shove off from the shore a little way; and there in the stern of the boat, he sat and talked to the people on the beach.

When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Go further out, and cast your nets." "Master," said Simon, "we have toiled all the night and have caught nothing; yet, at thy word, I will let down the net." So it was done, and immediately Simon felt the net strain to the breaking under the weight of a great shoal of fish. He called his partners in the second boat to his help, and they filled both the boats with their great catch, so that they were ready to sink.

Simon was thunder-struck at this revelation of the power of Jesus, and the thought of his own sinfulness overwhelmed him. He fell down at his Master's knees. "Depart from me," he cried, "for I am a sinful man, O Lord." Jesus raised him up. "Fear not," he said, "from henceforth thou shalt catch men." So began the true discipleship of Simon and Andrew, James and John. Leaving their boats and nets to the care of others, they forsook all, and followed Jesus.

Just as sudden was the decision of another of the Saviour's followers. Matthew was the tax-gatherer at the customhouse in the town of Capernaum by the lake-side where the trade of the North and East passed down to the Mediterranean by the great road called "Via Maris," "The Way of the Sea." The tax-gatherers, or publicans, as men called them, were hated and despised by all men, for their trade was the badge of the nation's servitude to Rome, and they were usually unjust and merciless men, wringing from the people far more than was rightly due. Yet among them Jesus found more than one whose soul was longing for the truth, and who was ready to listen to God's call. So it was with Matthew.

One day when he was busy in his office, Jesus passed by with his disciples, and as he passed he beckoned to Matthew, "Follow me," he said; and at that word the hard tax-gatherer felt that all his life was changed. He rose, and left his books and his office, and went after the Saviour to a life of homelessness and poverty. Ere he broke altogether with the past, he made a feast in his house for his new Master, and gathered to meet him all the tax-gatherers of the neighbourhood, and such friends as they had, the outcasts of society. The righteous people of Capernaum were indignant at the thought of a teacher of religion breaking bread with "publicans and sinners." Angrily they taxed the disciples with their Master's carelessness. "Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?" Jesus heard it, and gave them their answer. "They that be whole need not a physician," he said, "but they that are sick. I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."

So, in one way and another, he gathered round him a little com-

pany of faithful friends who looked to him as God's own light sent to lead them. And, later, he chose twelve of them to be with him always, and to carry on his work when his life on earth should end. And because he sent them forth to teach what he had first taught them, they were called "Apostles," that is to say, "Men sent." Most of them were working men like their Master, most of them young, like himself; none was learned or of high rank. Jesus chose them because their minds and hearts were open and ready to receive the truth; and his wisdom in the choice was abundantly justified, for these were the men who turned the world upside down.

(4) A WEDDING-FEAST

THREE days after Jesus had returned to Galilee, there was a marriage at the little town of Cana, northwards over the hills from Nazareth. Mary was invited to be present at the feast, perhaps because the bridegroom or the bride was a friend of the family; and when it was known that Jesus and his companions had come back from the Jordan Valley, they, too, were asked to share in the rejoicings. A wedding-feast in Palestine is a time of great joy and merriment. The bride is brought home at nightfall with music and dancing and torch-light, and for days the rejoicings go on. That Jesus went to such a feast shows how different he was from his cousin John the Baptist. John, with his stern face and his love of solitude, would have seemed out of place in the midst of all the merriment; but Jesus loved to be happy with the happy, and to touch men's lives in their joys as well as in their sorrows. So he crossed the hills to Cana with his new disciples, and shared in all the gladness of the country wedding; and perhaps it was the arrival of these six guests, who had not been provided for, which made the difficulty that arose. For the wine began to run short, and there was great vexation in the family, and whispered consultations as to what was to be done; for it would have been held great disgrace and great breach of hospitality to have brought guests together and

then not to have enough wine to offer them. Mary's friends had told her of the strait that they were in, and she bethought herself of the son of whom she was so proud. Surely he, who was so wise and good, would find a way out of the difficulty. So she came to him, and whispered, "They have no wine." His answer sounds harsh and unkind to us. "Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour has not yet come." But that is only because we scarcely get the right sense of the words, and perhaps most of all because we cannot hear the tone in which they were spoken. For the word that we translate "Woman," is a word of respect which means "Lady," also; and though Jesus had to tell Mary that he must take his own time and way, he told her with all the gentleness and reverence that such a son would give to such a mother. What he meant, and what she understood, was—"Mother, do not urge me. You must let me do this in my own way." Mary was quite satisfied. She turned to the servants who were waiting at table, and said, "Do whatever he tells you."

Near the door of the great chamber stood six great earthenware jars, which were meant to hold the water that is poured over the hands and feet of every Eastern guest before he partakes of his meal. Jesus called the servants to him, and pointed to the jars. "Fill the water-pots with water," he said; and they filled them till they were brimming. "Now," he said, "draw it off, and carry it to the Master of Ceremonies." Perhaps the servants were a little frightened when they were told to carry water to the table instead of wine; but they remembered what Mary had said, and did as they were told. The Master of Ceremonies put his lips to the cup that was brought to him; he had no idea of what had happened, only he knew that this was the best wine he had ever tasted. He called gaily to the bridegroom. "Why," he said, "other people always bring out their good wine first, and when everybody has drunk freely, then they bring out what is not so good; but thou hast kept the good wine until now."

Everybody heard what he said, and the servants who had filled the water-pots would tell the story of how the clear well-water was changed, as they carried it, into sparkling wine; and so at last everyone understood that a great wonder had been done, and that

the quiet carpenter who had come to the feast had power and glory such as were not given to common men. And that first of his miracles helped the new disciples to believe all the more surely in their young Master.

(5) A VISIT TO JERUSALEM

NOT long after the wedding-feast in Cana, the time came round for the keeping of the great Passover Feast in Jerusalem, and Jesus, with his disciples, joined the company of Galilean pilgrims, and travelled up to the Holy City. This was his first visit to it after the beginning of his work, and it was so marked out that none could forget it. For when the Saviour came into the outer courts of the Temple, he found them full of noise and clamour, of quarrel and argument, as though God's House had been a cattle-market. You must understand that the pilgrims who came from all parts of Palestine, and from far-off lands, to the feast, could not bring oxen, and sheep, and doves with them for sacrifice, and so these had to be provided nearer at hand. Moreover the Temple dues could not be paid in Roman money, but only in the special Temple coinage. So there had grown up round the Temple a regular market, where all the beasts needed for sacrifice might be bought, and where the money of any land could be changed into shekels of the Temple.

That was well enough, and perhaps needful; but bit by bit this traffic crept down to the Temple, until at last the cattle dealers and the money-changers got a footing within the very courts, and worshippers who came to pray in peace and quietness to their heavenly Father were deafened by the shouts of greedy men, and the lowing of cattle, and the bleating of sheep. And besides, the men who drove this trade were men of such character that the oath of a Temple money-changer was not accepted in a court of justice.

Little wonder, then, that when Jesus looked upon this sordid scene of bargaining and cheatery that filled the courts of his

Father's House, his heart was filled with righteous anger. Knotting together some small cords into a scourge, not to strike with, but as a symbol of judgment, he came into the midst of the chaffering, quarrelling mob. "Take these things hence," he said sternly, "make not my Father's House an house of merchandise." So he drove them all before him, merchants, and drovers, and cattle together; and when the money-changers would have resisted, he poured out their money on the marble pavement, and overset their tables. "It is written," he cried again, "'My house shall be called the House of Prayer,' but ye have made it a den of thieves." Before his look of burning indignation and his words of authority, the whole pack of rogues slunk away abashed and cowed, and the Temple was cleared.

No man dared to question his act; but some demanded, "What sign givest thou of thine authority to do such things?" "Destroy this temple," he said, "and in three days I will raise it up." They stared at him in amazement. "Six and forty years was this Temple a-building," they said, "and wilt thou rear it up in three days?" But Jesus spoke in a parable of the temple of his body, which should rise in three days again from the dust of the grave; and when his disciples witnessed his Resurrection, they remembered these words that he had spoken so early in his ministry.

After such an action, Jesus, as you may well understand, was a marked man in Jerusalem. Everywhere men talked of the young teacher from Galilee, and some were for him, and some against him. One night when the darkness had fallen, and he had sought his resting-place, perhaps in some humble lodging in the city, perhaps under the shade of the trees on the Mount of Olives, there came to him a man of place and power in the land, Nicodemus, the third in rank of the Great Council of Seventy, who bore the title of the Teacher of Israel. His heart told him that Jesus had right upon his side; yet he was afraid to stand by him openly, and wished to speak with him where none could see or hear. "Master," he began courteously, "we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him."

Jesus read the speaker's heart, and saw that though he was in

"BY THE GALILEAN LAKE."
(Matthew, iv, 18.)

earnest, he still thought of religion only as an outward thing, and of God's kingdom as an earthly kingdom. "Truly," he said, "I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus was staggered and puzzled. "How can a man be born when he is old?" he said. "Can he be born a second time?" "Truly it is so," answered Jesus. "Except a man be born of baptism and of God's spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. For flesh only is born of flesh, and spirit of spirit." The night breeze ruffled the trees around as he spoke. "Wonder not," he said, "that I said, 'ye must be born again.' Listen to the wind. It blows free, and thou hearest its sound; but whence it comes and whither it goes, who can tell? So is it when a man is born of the breath of God." "How can these things be?" said the puzzled Nicodemus. "What!" said Jesus to him, "thou, the Teacher of Israel, and knowest not these things!" Then he taught the wondering scribe how God had sent His Son into the world to bear the sins of man. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Nicodemus listened in awe and wonder, and the seed of truth sank into his heart. Not for many days was it to come to harvest; but the words that he had heard that night were never forgotten, and long afterwards when Jesus, as he foretold, had been lifted up on the Cross, bearing thus the sin of the world, there came the reaping time of that April night's sowing, and Nicodemus avowed himself a follower of the carpenter of Nazareth.

After the feast, Jesus left Jerusalem, and journeyed with his disciples in Judea; and many listened to his teaching and were baptised. Meanwhile John was baptising at the wells of Ænon, near Salim, and his disciples heard of the work of the new teacher. Jealous for their master's honour, they came to John. "Master," they said, "he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness,— he is now baptising and all men are coming to him." (Though indeed Jesus baptised not, but only his disciples.) But John's great heart was proof against petty jealousies. "Jesus or I," he said, "we have nothing but what is given us from on high. Yourselves know that I said, 'I am not the Christ, but

am sent before him.' It is the bridegroom who hath the bride. But the bridegroom's friend, standing by his side and hearing him, is glad because of the bridegroom's voice. My joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease."

Thus the forerunner of Jesus put from him all thought of rivalry with his Lord. And it was not long after these days that John was seized and imprisoned by the vile Herod Antipas. For the Baptist had boldly condemned Herod's evil marriage with Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip; and Herodias, a wicked and cruel woman, thirsted for his blood. Herod himself, a weak and wavering creature, was much impressed by John's teaching, and would fain have obeyed him, had he dared; but his wife's influence was over-strong. Yet he willed no harm to John, and indeed he imprisoned him only that he might keep him safe against the malice of Herodias. But so it fell out, in the end, as you shall hear, that the sin which the King would not part from mastered his desire for the right, and Herod was trapped at last into the staining of his hands with the blood of a righteous man.

(6) BY THE WELL OF SYCHAR

ERE long Jesus heard of the malicious gossip of the Pharisees, who sought to stir up strife between him and his great kinsman by saying that he was baptising more disciples than John. Therefore he left Judea, and journeyed towards Galilee. Now the stricter Jews, when they travelled between Judea and Galilee, would never pass through Samaria, though that was the shortest road, but preferred to cross the Jordan and make a circuit on the eastern side of the river. For there was an ancient quarrel between Jew and Samaritan, since the days when the Samaritans had offered to help in the rebuilding of the Temple after the Return from Exile, and had been refused. Jesus cared nothing, however, for the quarrels of his countrymen, and he took the direct road northwards through Samaria.

One day, about noontide, he and his disciples drew near to the

little town of Sychar, which nestles in the valley between the hills of Ebal and Gerizim. The place was holy ground in the story of Israel, for it was the land which Jacob had given as an heritage to Joseph, and where the bones of the great viceroy of Egypt had been laid to rest. Not far from the village was the ancient well which Jacob had dug in days of old. Jesus was wearied with the long journey, and sate him down to rest by the well-side, while his disciples went on into the village to buy bread. As he rested, there came a Samaritan woman from the village, with her water-pot and her rope, to draw water, and Jesus greeted her, and asked her to draw water that he might drink. The woman turned to him, none too civilly, with all the old hatred of the Samaritan to the Jew in her question: "How is it that thou, a Jew, askest drink of me, a woman of Samaria?"

Jesus was sorry for the poor creature who knew so little of her own needs, and of the blessing that was so near her. "Ah," he said, "if only thou knewest what God can give, and who it is that says to thee, 'Give me to drink;' thou wouldst ask of him, and he would give thee living water." Still the woman thought only of what she could see and touch. "Sir," she said, "thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. How canst thou get that living water? Our father Jacob gave us the well, and himself, and his children, and his cattle drank thereof. Art thou greater than he?" "Whoso drinketh of this water," answered Jesus, "shall thirst again; but whoso drinketh of the water that I shall give shall never thirst; but that water shall be in his heart a fountain springing up to life everlasting." Still she was blind, and thought only of her own household needs and cares. "Lord, give me this water," she said, "that I thirst not, neither have to come hither to draw."

Jesus turned the conversation abruptly, for he saw that she needed something to shake her out of her stupid worldliness. "Go call thy husband, and come hither," he said. That command probed the sore of her life. She looked sullenly on the ground. "I have no husband," she said. "True," said Jesus, for he knew the shame of her life, "thou hast had five husbands, and he with whom thou now livest is not thy husband—in that thou speakest truth." The woman was amazed—Jesus knew too much about

her for her comfort—it was time to turn the conversation. "Sir," she said, "I see that thou art a prophet. Tell me now—our fathers worshipped in this mountain," and she pointed to the purple crest of Gerizim with the Samaritan temple crowning it, "and ye say that men ought to worship at Jerusalem—which is right?" "Woman," said Jesus, "believe me the hour is near when here or there shall matter nothing in worship. Indeed the Jew is right, for he knows whom he worships, while ye worship in ignorance. But the hour draws nigh, nay, it is here and now, when true worshippers anywhere shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for He seeketh such to worship Him. God is spirit; and they that worship Him must worship in spirit, and in truth."

"I know—" said the woman, wondering and perplexed, "I know that Messiah cometh, the Christ; when he is come, he will tell us all things." Jesus answered, "I that speak unto thee am He."

At that moment the disciples came back. Much they wondered to see their Master talking with a Samaritan woman; yet none dared to question him. Meanwhile the woman, forgetting all about her errand, left her water-jar and ran to the village. "Come," she cried to the men who gathered in the street, "come, see a man who told me all that ever I did. Is not this the Christ?" And they all came crowding out at the gate to see this new prophet.

By the well-side, the disciples pressed food upon Jesus. "Nay," he said, "I have food to eat that ye know not of." They wondered and whispered among themselves. "Hath any one given him aught to eat?" Jesus read their thoughts. "My meat," he said, "is to do the will of Him that sent me and to finish His work." Then as he saw the crowd hurrying towards him, he turned to his disciples. "Do ye not say, 'Still four months, and then harvest?'" he said. "Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, for they are white already to harvest." But he spake of the harvest of the soul.

So the Samaritans of Sychar begged him to stay with them awhile; and for two days he abode with them and taught them. Many believed, and said to the woman, "It was your report that brought us to him; but we believe now, not because of what you said for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world."

AT THE POOL OF BETHESDA.
(John, v, 1–9.)

Part III. *Stories of the Bright Days in Galilee*

(1) HOW THE FAME OF JESUS GREW

ND now Jesus came back to his own country of Galilee, and began the work that was to be the brightest and happiest part of his ministry on earth. Hatred and opposition he had to meet, even in Galilee, and the saddest part of it all was that the people of his own town of Nazareth would not believe in him, and cast him out; but in spite of that, he found more to believe, and more to follow him among the honest, simple folk of Galilee than ever he did later in Judea and Jerusalem. The better part of a year had gone by since John had baptised him in Jordan, and yet it seemed as though his work were scarce begun. He had only a handful of followers; here and there people spoke of the wonderful things he had done; but his work had made no such stir in the land as John's had done.

But when he came back to Galilee after the busy days in Sychar, his fame began to grow, and the Galileans began to realise that a great prophet had come among them. In these days Galilee was the busiest and the most populous part of Palestine. The great caravan roads that led from the East down to the ports of the Mediterranean, ran through the heart of the land, crowds of traders were always coming and going along them, and thriving towns were scattered thickly over the whole countryside. Trade had brought with it many foreigners, so that the Galileans were far more in touch with other nations of the world than the men of Judea, and were not nearly so narrow-minded as their brothers in the south. And so it was that the message of Jesus found far more ready listeners in Galilee, and met with far less stubborn unbelief than elsewhere.

The centre of the whole land was the Sea of Galilee, a harp-

shaped lake, lying among hills, and surrounded by a group of busy towns. Today the Sea of Galilee is a desolate, lonely spot, with only one town, Tiberias, a poor, unhealthy, fever-haunted place, upon its shores. But when Jesus lived and taught there, the lake was girdled by nine towns, none of them with less than fifteen thousand inhabitants, and its waters were covered by the boats of the fishing and trading fleets. So you can understand how it was that such crowds followed Jesus in a land which now is lonely and desolate. One more thing you must notice if you want to understand the work of Jesus. Wherever he went in Galilee there seem to have been crowds of sick folk,—lepers, and blind, and fevered; so that you wonder how it was that there was so much sickness in the country. Well, the reason is that not far from the lake-side, and near the town of Tiberias, there were hot springs which were famed for their healing power. All sorts of diseased folk used to throng to them, as they do still; and so when Jesus was working by the Sea of Galilee, he was just in the place where all the sickness of the land was gathered together.

It was by his healing of the sick people of Galilee that the fame of Jesus grew. When he preached and taught, men marvelled, indeed, at his wonderful words, and at the sureness and authority with which he spoke; but it was the wonders of healing that drew them first to him, and made his name famous throughout the land.

One day he went into the synagogue at Capernaum, and began to speak to the people gathered there; and the congregation listened wonderingly, for such teaching they had never heard before. Suddenly a wild shout rang through the building. It came from a poor maniac, possessed, as the Jews believed, with an evil spirit. "Let alone!" he shouted. "What have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? Art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God." Jesus turned quietly to the raving figure. "Silence," he said, "come out of him." With convulsions and one last wild cry, the madness left the man, and he was cured and sane. That day the congregation had something to talk of as they scattered to their homes. "What can this mean?" they said to one another. "What new teaching is this? He commands even foul spirits with authority, and they obey

him." Every man who had been in the synagogue that day was a herald for the fame of Jesus, and the story ran swiftly through all the land.

The wonders of that day were not yet done. Leaving the synagogue, he went with James and John into the house of his other two friends, Simon and Andrew. The mother of Simon's wife was lying in the house, shaking with fever, and Simon told his master of her sad plight. Jesus came to her bedside, took her by the hand, and raised her up. Lo! at his touch the fever left her, and she went about her household duties, healed and strong.

When the sun went down that night, and the Sabbath rest was over, the whole town seemed to be moved by a single impulse. From every street there came a new crowd, bearing on litters and beds a pitiful group of sufferers. Fevered and blind and dumb, lame and deaf and maniac—all the misery of Capernaum was gathered round the door of Simon's house. In the gathering dusk Jesus moved among the wretched crowd, speaking, touching, commanding, and wherever he passed he left health and sanity behind him. Never had Capernaum known such a day. Little wonder that when Simon found his Master next morning on the hillside where he had been spending hours in prayer to his heavenly Father, the message that he brought was, "All men are seeking for thee." "Nay," said Jesus, "let us go into the neighbouring towns, that I may preach there also; for that is why I am come."

One day as Jesus journeyed with his disciples from one town to another, there came to him a man smitten with leprosy, that ghastly death in life that rots the flesh and bones while its victim is still above ground. The poor creature knelt in the dust before the Saviour, stretching out his maimed hands in pitiful entreaty. "If thou wilt," he said, "thou canst make me clean." Jesus was filled with pity. The touch of a leper meant that you became yourself unclean, and had to pass through a weary process of purifying before you were counted fit to mix with men again; but Jesus stretched out his hand at once, laid it on the poor, marred head, and said, "I will: be thou clean." As he spake, the wonder happened—the open sores were dried, the deadly whiteness

vanished from the skin—the man was clean. "See thou say nothing to any man," said Jesus; "but go, shew thyself to the priest, and offer the sacrifice that Moses bade men offer for their cleansing." But the leper could not hold his peace. His joy was too great to be kept silent. Everywhere he told the story of his healing, so that Jesus found his fame a hindrance rather than a help, for he could not enter into the towns because of the crowds that gathered wherever he came. So he dwelt for a while in solitary country places; yet even there the people came to him from every quarter.

After a time he came to Capernaum again. The news ran like wildfire through the town that the Great Healer was come, and at once the house where he dwelt was surrounded by a crowd that filled it and overflowed into the street, so that none could even approach the door. Within, in the central court of the house, Jesus spoke to those who were gathered—Scribes and Pharisees among them, jealously watching the new teacher. Suddenly there came a stir and a clatter on the flat roof of the house, four men were seen busily pulling away the parapet of the roof, and breaking up the tiles, and in a few minutes they lowered down a couch of matting with a helpless figure upon it to the very feet of Jesus. The man was paralysed. His friends had heard of the coming of the great wonder worker, and had brought their comrade to be healed; but the crowds around the door of the house had been too dense for them to break through. Not to be beaten they had entered the next house and climbed from the one roof to the other, till at last in this strange way they got their poor friend to the feet of Jesus.

Their courage and their faith touched the Saviour's heart. He stooped over the helpless figure on the couch. "Son," he said, "thy sins be forgiven thee." At that word the Scribes and Pharisees, bitter men from Judea some of them, were mightily indignant. "This man speaks blasphemy!" they said, in their hearts. "Who can forgive sins, save God alone?" Jesus knew the thoughts that were passing in their minds, and gave them their answer. "Why do ye think such things?" he said. "Whether is it easier to say, 'Thy sins be forgiven thee,' or to say, 'Arise, and take up

thy bed, and walk?' Know then that the Son of Man has power to forgive sins!" With that word he turned to the paralytic at his feet. "Rise," he said, "take up thy bed, and go thy way to thine house." Forthwith the helpless creature rose to his feet, rolled his couch together, and went out before them all, praising God as he went. Great was the amazement of the crowd. All gave glory to God; and even the Pharisees were forced to say, "We have seen strange things today! Such a thing as this we never saw!"

Deeds like these spread abroad the fame of Jesus through all the land, so that wherever he went he was followed by a crowd of people, eager to see the wonders which he wrought, and to hear the gracious words which he spake.

(2) HOW JESUS WAS DRIVEN FROM HIS OWN HOME

THERE was one place in Galilee, however, which would have nothing to do with the fame of Jesus; and that was his own town of Nazareth, where he had been brought up. Perhaps one need hardly wonder at it, for we are all slow to believe in the greatness of one whom we have known familiarly as a child, a boy, a young man. The men of Nazareth had known Jesus for thirty years, had seen him grow to manhood among them, had brought their work to the carpenter's shop, and had seen him mending their ploughs and carts and tools. It was not easy for them to believe that the village carpenter had all of a sudden become a great man. Even his own brothers and sisters could not bring themselves to think that their brother was so much greater than they. And so while all Galilee was ablaze with the fame of the Saviour, Nazareth remained cold and unbelieving.

After a time it fell out that he came to his old home, and as he was wont, he went on the Sabbath into the synagogue where he used to worship when he was a boy. The congregation was gathered, men on one side, women, Mary perhaps among them, on the other, with a screen of lattice-work between them. At the end of the building nearest Jerusalem, stood a chest containing the rolls

of Scripture from which portions were read during the service, and beside it was a platform for the reader, and a raised seat for the elders and their chief, the ruler of the synagogue.

When Jesus came in, he took his seat near to the reading-desk, to show that he was ready to read and speak to the people. For in the Jewish synagogue there was no regular preacher, and any one who was known to be able to explain the Scriptures was allowed to speak. Everyone there that day expected to hear Jesus, and you can imagine the rustle of interest that went through the building, and then the hush that fell upon the congregation when they saw him stand up and take the roll of Isaiah's prophecies which the reader handed to him. He unrolled it till he had found the place he sought, and then the wonderful words of the old prophet sounded from his lips:

"*The spirit of the Lord God is upon me;*
Because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek;
He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted,
To proclaim liberty to the captives,
And opening of the eyes to the blind;
To proclaim the year of the Lord's good pleasure."

There he stopped suddenly, for he did not wish to read what comes next—"and the day of vengeance of our God;" and handing back the roll to the reader, he sat down, as the custom was, to speak. All in the building knew that he had more to say, and they waited in hushed expectation, their eyes fixed upon his face.

At last he spoke. "This day is this Scripture which you have heard fulfilled!" For a moment his people almost believed. His words of grace seemed to cast a spell upon their spirits. Then they came back, as they thought, to reality and common-sense. "After all," they whispered to one another, "is not this Joseph's son? Joseph, who used to work for us?" Jesus knew what was in their minds. "No doubt," he went on, "ye will throw me the old proverb—'Physician, heal thyself. You have done wonders in Capernaum, do the like here in thine own country.' But true it

is that no prophet is accepted in his own country." Mercies and wonders, he said, were not for the chosen people alone—sometimes God passed them by, and wrought his great works among the heathen. In the days of Elijah, when the heavens were shut up for three years and six months and a great famine was in the land, there were many widows in Israel; but Elijah was sent to none of them—he was sent to a widow of Zarephath in the heathen land of Sidon. In the days of Elisha there were many lepers in Israel—cleansing came to none of them—only to Naaman the Syrian.

It was enough. The very thought that the man who claimed to be Jehovah's messenger should tell them of mercy to the heathen raised them to uncontrollable fury. They sprang to their feet, seized him, and dragged him out of the town to the brow of the hill in whose nook Nazareth lies. Thence they would cast down the blasphemer headlong, and pile stones upon his mangled body. And then—Jesus looked upon them as they raged around him! The furious shouts died into awe-struck silence, the menacing hands dropped. No man dared to lift a finger, or to block the way, as Jesus quietly and serenely passed in silence through the midst of the crowd, and left the old home that was home for him no more. He never came back to Nazareth again.

(3) AT THE POOL OF BETHESDA

SPRING-TIME came round once more, and brought with it the great Feast of the Passover, and as he was wont, Jesus went up to Jerusalem to keep the feast. Now in the city, by the Sheep Gate, there was a pool of water. It was surrounded by a pillared arcade with five porches, and in the shadow of the arcade there lay a great multitude of sick folk, blind and lame and paralysed, waiting for the time when the water should bubble up. For in the pool there was a spring which flowed strongly at certain seasons; and the people believed that then an angel came down and caused the water to flow, and that whoever

was first to plunge into the pool when it began to stir and to ripple, would be cured of whatsoever disease he had.

Suffering always drew Jesus to it, that he might help and heal, and on a certain Sabbath he went to the pool of the House of Mercy, for so its name Bethesda means. There among the crowd of sick folk he saw a man, who for eight and thirty years had been a helpless paralytic. His heart was touched with pity for this lifelong sufferer, and going up to him he touched his shoulder, and said, "Are you wanting to be healed?" The man lifted his dull eyes to the Saviour's face. "Wanting?" he said. "I may want. No friend have I, when the water stirs, to put me into the pool; while I am crawling to the edge another steps in before me." "Rise," said Jesus, "take up thy bed, and walk." Straightway power came into the man's shrivelled limbs. He rose, rolled up his couch of matting, and went forth cured.

But when the Jews saw him carrying his bed on the Sabbath, they rebuked him. "It is the Sabbath," they said. "It is not lawful for thee to carry thy bed today." "He that healed me," answered the man, "the same said to me, 'Take up thy bed, and walk?'" "What man dared to say such a thing?" they asked. But the man could not tell them, for Jesus had slipped away among the crowd by the pool.

Afterwards Jesus met him again, and said to him, "See, now, thou art healed; sin no more, lest something worse befall thee." Then the man knew who it was that had healed him, and told the Jews the name of his deliverer. And they, instead of praising God for His goodness, were filled with anger, and would fain have slain Jesus because he had done this on the Sabbath.

This question of the Sabbath day was ever a bone of contention between the stricter Jews and Jesus. For they made God's day a burden and a weariness to all men, forbidding them to do this and that on the Sabbath, till the day was a misery instead of a joy. It fell out that on a certain Sabbath Jesus and his disciples were walking through the corn-fields where the grain was ripening for the harvest; and as they went, being hungry, the disciples plucked some ears of corn and rubbed them in their hands, and ate, as the Law of Moses itself allowed them to do. Some of the Pharisees

saw what they did, and were mightily indignant, "See," they said to Jesus, "thy disciples are breaking the Sabbath law."

"Have ye not read," he answered, "what David and his men did when they were in need and hunger? How he went into the House of God and ate the shewbread, which only the priests ought to eat, and gave of it to his followers? Know that the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. The Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath itself." So for that time they were silenced; but they hated him the more.

On another Sabbath day he went into the synagogue. In the congregation there sat a man whose right hand was shrivelled and paralysed; and the Pharisees watched Jesus to see whether he would dare to heal this man on the Sabbath and in the House of God. Jesus read their thoughts. "Rise, and stand forth in the midst," he said to the man. Then when all eyes were fastened on him, he turned to the Pharisees. "Tell me," he said, "is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill? Is there one among yourselves even, who, if he have a sheep, and it fall into a ditch on the Sabbath, will not lay hold of it, and lift it out? Surely a man is more worth than a sheep!" Not one word had the Pharisees to say, but sat in sullen rage, knowing that they were baffled. Jesus looked on them indignantly, sore at heart for their stubbornness. Then he turned to the man beside him. "Stretch out thine hand," he said, and as he tried to obey, the shrunken muscles relaxed, and the hand was whole again. The Pharisees went forth and leagued themselves with the vilest in the land, the courtiers of King Herod, that they might destroy him; but Jesus turned back to Galilee again, and from all parts of the land the common people followed him, his own men of Galilee, men from Judea and Jerusalem, from rocky Edom and all the eastern side of Jordan, even from heathen Phœnicia. For all heard of the wonderful things which he did, and looked to see yet greater wonders.

(4) THE GREAT TEACHER

NOW Jesus was minded to make choice among his followers of the men who should be his messengers after he was gone back to his Father. He went up into a mountain by the Sea of Galilee—it may be that two-peaked mountain that men call the Horns of Hattin—and all through the night he prayed to God for guidance. When the day broke he called his disciples round him, and chose twelve of them, to be always near him, that they might learn his thoughts, and be able to teach them to others; and he gave them power over sickness and mania. Now the twelve were these—Simon, whom he had named Peter; James and John, the sons of Zebedee—"Boanerges," "Our Sons of Thunder," he called them, because they were quick and hot-tempered; Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew (who is Nathanael); Matthew the tax-gatherer of Capernaum, Thomas the Twin, and James the son of Alphæus; Judas, whose other name was Thaddæus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas of Kerioth, whom men call Iscariot. Galileans they all were save one, who came from the little town of Kerioth in Judea; and he was the traitor Apostle, who betrayed his Lord.

In the great hollow between the peaks of the hill a multitude was gathered awaiting the teacher. Jesus came with his twelve apostles, and sat down on the hill-side, with the people ranged around him on the slope, and began to speak to them such gracious words as men had never heard before:

"Blessed are the humble in spirit," he said, "for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."

These were his opening words, which men ever since have called "The Beatitudes," "The Blesseds," of the Saviour.

Then Jesus went on quietly and kindly, with gentle, loving words which yet seem to search out the very depths of men's hearts, to tell his hearers how they ought to live, how they should deal with their fellow men, how they should seek God, how they should trust Him, and how careful they should be to choose the true path of life, while they had yet the chance, lest they might find themselves outcast in the end.

Here are some of the things which fell upon the ears of the waiting crowd that day. "Do not think," he said, "that I am come to do away with the law or the prophets. I am not come for that, but to fulfil them. The Pharisees are your models of righteousness; but I tell you your righteousness must go far deeper than theirs, or ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Your ancient law says, 'Thou shalt not kill;' but I say that whoever is angry with his brother without a reason is in danger of judgment. You cannot worship God with a quarrel with your brother unhealed. If you bring your sacrifice to the altar, and remember that you have given your brother cause of offence, leave your sacrifice at the altar, seek your brother and be reconciled to him, and then come and offer your gift to God. If your right hand or right eye lead you into evil act or desire, cut it off, pluck it out, and cast it from you—better to lose a hand or an eye than to perish eternally."

He went on to talk of men's speech, and of their bearing towards their fellows. "The fathers used to say, 'Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform all thine oaths unto the Lord.' But I say, 'Swear no oaths at all. Never say more than you mean. Let

your Yea be Yea, and your Nay, Nay. Looseness of speech always ends in evil.' The fathers used to say, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy;' but I say unto you, 'Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, pray for them that illtreat you.' So shall ye be true children of your Father in heaven whose sun shines and whose rain falls not on the good only, but on the evil also. It is easy to love those that love you—even the publicans do that; but be ye perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect."

Then he turned to speak of prayer and giving of alms.

"When thou givest alms," he said, "do not sound a trumpet before thee, like the hypocrites, that men may praise thee. Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth. When thou prayest, do not pray like the hypocrites at the street corners, to be seen of men. Enter thine own chamber, shut the door, and pray to thy Father alone. Neither say the same thing over and over again, like the heathen, who think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Pray on this wise—'Our Father, which art in Heaven, Hallowed be Thy name, Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.'

"Lay not up thy treasure on earth, where moth and rust corrupt, and where thieves break in and steal. Lay up treasure in heaven, where moth and rust and thief cannot rob thee. So shall thine heart have peace; for where thy treasure is, there will thine heart be also.

" Be not anxious about your life, what ye shall eat, or drink, or wear. The life is more than meat, and the body than the clothes which cover it. Look at the birds of the air; they sow not, nor reap, nor gather into barns; yet your Father feedeth them. Consider the lilies of the field. They toil not, neither do they spin: yet even Solomon, in all his glory, was not robed so splendidly as one of these. Surely if God so clothe the grass, here today and burned tomorrow, he will much more clothe you. Therefore be not anxious for the morrow—the morrow will be anxious for itself; sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

Again he spoke of men's harsh judgments of their brethren. "Judge not; that ye be not judged. As ye judge, so shall ye be judged; as ye measure, so it shall be measured to you. Why so swift to see the speck of dust in thy brother's eye, and so slow to see the beam of wood in thine own? How canst thou say to him, 'Let me pull out the dust out of thine eye,' when all the time a beam is in thine own? Thou hypocrite, pull out first the beam from thine own eye; then shall thou see clearly to pull out the speck of dust from thy brother's eye."

"Enter ye at the narrow gate. Wide is the gate, and broad the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat; but narrow is the gate, and narrow the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. Not all who call me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but only he who doeth the will of my heavenly Father. In the great day of the Lord, many will say unto me, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and cast out devils, and done many wonderful works?' But I will answer them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, ye workers of iniquity.'"

So Jesus spake that day on the Galilean hillside to the listening multitude—words such as never man spake before—words of wisdom, and truth, and warning. And ever, like a crimson thread, there ran through his speech the great new thought of God as the Father in heaven, whose heart is full of love towards all His children. Small wonder that they who heard him marvelled at his teaching; for he spake, not as their own teachers did, quoting Rabbi This and Rabbi That, but as one whose knowledge was given him straight from God.

Thus he closed the teaching of that wonderful day. "Whosoever heareth these words of mine and doeth them, I liken him to a wise man, which built his house on a rock. The rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house; and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock. But every man that heareth my words, and doeth them not, him I liken unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand. The rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house; and it fell; and great was the fall thereof."

(5) THE FRIEND OF SINNERS

HERE was one nickname by which his enemies used to describe Jesus, which seemed, no doubt, a dreadful thing in their eyes, but was really the noblest title they could have given him. They called him "a friend of publicans and sinners." The Saviour could have chosen no better title for himself, indeed he was glad to think that this was how men looked at him. "For," said he, "they that be whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick. I came, not to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance." Just as the sick folk came to him, wherever he went, and were healed, so the men and women whom everybody despised, because their lives were stained and marred by sin, found that Jesus was ready to help them and stand by them; and, as they turned to him, new hope sprang up in their hearts, and they began to try to live better lives. He never made light of their sins, indeed when they were with him they felt more than ever what a dreadful and cruel thing sin was; but they knew that he loved them, in spite of their sin, and so they loved him in return, and were ready to fight against the evil that was spoiling their lives, and to give up their old ways, that they might become fit to be his friends.

One day it happened that a Pharisee asked Jesus to dine at his house. That was a strange thing, in itself, for most of the Pharisees hated Jesus, and were always plotting against him. Perhaps Simon (that was the Pharisee's name), began to think, after he had asked Jesus, that he had made a mistake; at all events he gave the Saviour rather a cold and half-hearted welcome. It was the custom, when any one invited guests to his house, to have water ready to wash the dust of the roads from their hands and feet before they sat down at table, and to anoint their heads with scented oil. But it seemed as though Simon thought Jesus not good enough to trouble over, for on this occasion he did none of these

things for his guest. Simon's omission was made up for in a way he had never dreamed of.

People in the East, you know, did not sit at table as we do. They reclined on couches beside the table, leaning on their left elbow, and helping themselves to the food with their right hands, while their feet stretched out behind them. And the doors of the house were not shut while dinner was going on, but people came and went, and talked to the guests as they reclined at the table. Now in that town there was a woman who had been leading a sinful life, and she heard that Jesus had gone to dine at Simon's house. She must have known about him before; perhaps she had heard his words, and longed to do something for the man who had spoken so gently and lovingly about those who, like herself, had gone astray.

She made up her mind that she would do something to honour the man who had given her the hope of freedom from her sins. So she took the most precious thing she had, an alabaster box of ointment, and came to Simon's house, and stood behind the Saviour's couch, as he reclined at meat. Very likely she meant to tell him of her gratitude; but as she stood there her heart swelled with feelings that were far too deep for words. Perhaps she remembered the early innocent days before sin had stained her life, and longed, with all her heart, to be as a little child again. She broke down completely, and, instead of speaking to Jesus, she fell into a passion of weeping. Her flowing tears dropped upon the Saviour's feet, and as she saw that, she wiped them away again with her long hair. Then, bending down, as one might bow before a King, she kissed his feet, and poured out over them the costly ointment that, no doubt, she had meant to pour upon his head.

You would have thought that any one who saw this would have been touched; but Simon the Pharisee was only annoyed that so unseemly an exhibition, as he thought it, should have been made in his house, and before his guests. What would people think of him? This was what came of asking a friend of sinners to his table. "If this man were a prophet," he said to himself, "he would have known what kind of woman this is who is touching him; for she is a sinner." Jesus knew perfectly what Simon was

thinking, and he turned to his host. "Simon," he said, "I have something to say to thee." "Rabbi, say on," answered the Pharisee, wondering, no doubt, what was coming next. Jesus, it appeared, had a little story to tell. "There was a certain creditor," he said, "which had two debtors; one owed him five hundred silver pennies, and the other fifty. Neither of them was able to pay anything, and he frankly forgave them both. Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him most?"

Simon tried to make his answer sound as careless as he could, for he saw that Jesus was leading him where he did not want to go. "I suppose," he said indifferently, "he to whom he forgave most." "Thou hast rightly judged," said Jesus. He raised himself on his elbow, and pointed to the weeping woman at his feet. "Seest thou this woman? I came into thine house; thou gavest me no water for my feet; but she hath washed my feet with her tears, and wiped them with her hair. Thou gavest me no kiss of welcome; this woman, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. Thou didst not anoint my head with oil, but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Therefore I say unto thee, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much; but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little." And to the woman he said, "Thy sins are forgiven."

Simon was silent—perhaps a little ashamed of himself, perhaps only speechless with anger at the public humiliation that had been put upon him. But among his brother Pharisees round the table there passed a buzz of indignant scorn of this upstart who presumed to take so much upon himself. "Who is this that forgiveth sins also?" Jesus paid no heed to it. "Thy faith hath saved thee," he said to the woman, "go in peace."

There was another time, later on in his work, when Jesus tried to explain to the Pharisees how God really looks upon sinners, how he does not hate and scorn them, but loves them all the time, and sorrows over them, and wants to win them back. It happened in this way. As usual, Jesus, as he taught, was surrounded by a crowd of the sort of people whom the good folks despised—publicans and sinners. The old familiar grumble came from the Pharisees—"This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them."

"A WOMAN WHICH WAS A SINNER."
(Luke, vii. 36–50.)

Jesus heard their murmurs, and tried to show them how tenderly and mercifully their Father in heaven regarded the poor, lost folk whom they scorned. "Here is a shepherd," he said, "who has an hundred sheep. When he finds that one of them is missing, what does he do? He leaves the ninety and nine in their safety, and goes out to seek for the lost sheep. When he finds it he lifts it on his shoulders, and brings it home, rejoicing. Then he calls his friends and neighbours together, and says to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!'" "So," said the Saviour, "I tell you, there is joy in heaven over one repenting sinner, more than over ninety and nine righteous people who need no repentance."

Still the hard faces of the Pharisees showed no sign that they were touched by what he had said. He tried once more. "A woman," he said, "has ten pieces of silver in her little store and loses one of them. At once she lights her lamp, and sweeps the house, turning over all the dust in every corner of each room, and does not rest until she has found the lost coin. When she has found it, she, too, calls her friends and neighbours together. 'Rejoice with me,' she says, 'for I have found the coin which I have lost.' Even so there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one repenting sinner."

Still the Pharisees gloomed and scowled, and the Saviour made one more effort to touch their hard hearts. "A certain man," he said, "had two sons. The younger one came to him, and said, 'Father, give me the share of your goods that should fall to me.' So the father divided his property between the two sons. Shortly afterwards the younger son took all his share, and went into a distant land, and there squandered all that he had in foolish extravagance. By and by, when all was spent, a great famine fell upon the land, and he began to be in want. All his fair-weather friends forsook him, and he was forced at last to take service with a citizen of the country, who sent him into his fields to feed swine. Many a day he grudged the swine the husks on which they fed, and no man pitied him in his hunger and misery.

"Suffering brought him to his senses. 'What a fool I have been!' he said to himself. 'The hired servants in my father's house have

bread enough and to spare, while I am starving here. I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, 'Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.'" So he arose, and came to his father.

"All the long years of his absence his father had been hoping and watching for his return; and now when he saw the tattered, miserable figure coming in the distance, he knew his son at once. His heart filled with love and pity; he ran to meet the wanderer, threw his arms about his neck and kissed him. The son began the little story of repentance that he had rehearsed in the far country—'Father, I have sinned against Heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son'—but he got no further. His father called to the wondering servants. 'Bring forth the best robe,' he said, 'and put it on him. Put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. And bring hither the fatted calf and kill it; and let us eat and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' So the whole household rejoiced with the father in his joy over his son.

"Now the elder son had been working in the fields, and as the evening fell he came home. Lo! the house was all lit up, and the sound of music and dancing streamed forth from door and window. He called one of the servants. 'What does all this mean?' he said. 'Thy brother has come,' answered the servant, 'and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound.' Then the elder son was angry, and turned sullenly away from the door. His father heard of his anger, and came out to plead with him. The son's anger broke out in bitter words. 'Lo!' he cried, 'these many years have I served thee, never disobeying thine orders; yet thou never gavest me so much as a kid, that I might make a feast with my friends; but as soon as this, thy son, was come, who hath devoured thy living with vile women, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.'

"The father's heart was grieved when he saw his son so hard and bitter. 'Son,' he said gently, 'thou art always with me, and all that I have is thine. It was right that we should make merry and be glad; for this, thy brother (not my son only, but thy

brother as well), was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.'"

Jesus stopped there. He left the Pharisees to finish the story for themselves; and perhaps it only made them the angrier, for they must have seen that they stood in the place of the elder son whose heart felt no joy in his brother's return. But the publicans and sinners who heard the story knew that the Prodigal was meant for them! How their hearts must have filled with joy at the thought that their Heavenly Father loved them still, and was ready to welcome them as they came back to Him out of the far country of their sin.

(6) THE GREAT PHYSICIAN

N these happy days of his work in Galilee, you can imagine Jesus travelling from town to town, and from village to village, quietly talking with his disciples as they walked, and filling their minds with new thoughts about God and righteousness, and their hearts with love. The Twelve were always with him, save when he sent them out to teach in their turn what he had taught them, and to heal as they had seen him heal. With him also went a group of women, some of them well-off, and of good station, who had learned to trust and to love him, and who followed him that they might serve him and hear more of his wonderful words. Such were Joanna, wife of Chuza, who was master of the household to the vile King Herod, and a certain Susanna, of whom we know almost nothing, and Mary of Magdala, who had once been insane, but had been healed by Jesus, and loved him, in return, with a wonderful love.

Sometimes as they passed along the shores of the Sea of Galilee, great crowds gathered to hear what the new Rabbi had to say. One morning the crowd was so dense that Jesus could not command them all with his voice from where he stood on the shore. A fishing boat lay on the beach close at hand, and Jesus, bidding them launch it and push off a few yards from the shore, sat in the

stern of the little vessel, and his quiet words came across the still waters to the rows of eager listeners on the slopes above the lake. "A sower," he said, "went forth to sow. As he sowed, some of the seed fell on a pathway that had been trodden through the field, and as it lay there on the hard ground, the birds came and devoured it. Some fell on a shallow patch of ground, where a rocky shelf lay beneath. Very soon it sprang up, because there was no depth of earth; but as the sun grew hotter, it withered away, because there was no sap in the shallow ground to feed it. Some fell among thorns; and as the corn grew, the thorns grew faster still, until the corn was choked and perished. But some fell upon good ground, and brought forth a plentiful harvest, some of it an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty." Jesus was fond of preaching thus, as it were by pictures; and sometimes his disciples could not understand all that he meant. But when they failed to grasp his meaning, he was very patient with them, explaining to them all that lay beneath the pictures that he thus drew for them in words.

Thus it was with this parable of the Sower. "When any one heareth God's word," he said, "without understanding it, the evil one cometh, and snatcheth away that which was heard—just as the birds caught up the seed that fell on the hard pathway through the field. Sometimes men receive the word of God with joy, and make a great ado about it for a while, but never really grasp the depth and power of it. So whenever trouble and hardship come to them because of their religion, they fail, and forsake the truth. These men are like the shallow soil above the shelf of rock. Or again a man receives God's word into his heart, but he has many other things to think of—the cares of his worldly business, and the anxieties of money—and these things crowd out the teaching he has heard, so that it has no result in his life. He is like the ground where the seed fell among thorns. But some take the word into good, true hearts, and it lives there, and works in their lives, just as the seed that fell in good soil brought forth an abundant harvest."

Once more he gave them a picture of sowing and reaping. "A man," he said, "sowed good seed in his field. But at night when

THE PRODIGAL.
(Luke, xv, 15.)

men slept, his enemy came, and sowed tares among the wheat. So when the wheat grew up, there were the rank tares among it. His servants came to him. 'Sir,' they said, 'didst thou not sow good seed in thy field? Whence, then, come these tares?' 'An enemy hath done this,' he said. 'Shall we pluck up the tares?' asked the servants. 'Nay,' he said, 'for while ye root up the tares, it may be that ye will root up the wheat also. Let them both grow together till harvest comes. Then I will say to the reapers, 'Gather together the tares first, and bind them in bundles and burn them; but gather the wheat into my barn.' "

When the people were gone away his disciples said to him, "Tell us the meaning of this picture of the tares." And he answered them, "He who sowed the good seed, is the Son of Man; the field is the world; the good seed are the children of God's kingdom; the tares are the children of the wicked one, and he who sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world, and the reapers are the angels. As the tares are gathered and burned in harvest time, so all things that are evil shall be gathered in God's day of judgment, and cast into a furnace of fire, where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. But the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in God's kingdom."

So Jesus spoke again and again in parables, telling men how God's Kingdom was like treasure hid in a field, which a man finds, and, for gladness of it, sells all that he has that he may buy the field, and possess the treasure—or like a precious pearl that is offered by a pearl-fisher to a trader, who, when he sees it, goes and sells all the other pearls that he has been gathering, that he may have enough to buy this pearl of pearls. The people loved to hear his words, though they did not always understand them; and his own disciples laid them up in their hearts, and wrote them down in after days.

But the thing that drew the multitudes to the Saviour even more than his wonderful words, was his power as a Healer. Ever and anon, as he passed on his way, some poor creature, stricken with sore sickness of the body or the mind, would seek him or be brought unto him, never in vain; and people crowded to see the wonders and the wonder worker. It happened one evening, after

a hard day's work, that Jesus was so exhausted that he could do no more. "Let us pass unto the other side of the lake," he said, and his disciples took him, just as he was, down to the boat, and while they rowed, he lay in the stern, sunk in the deep sleep of exhaustion.

A sudden squall came down upon the waters, the waves rose and beat into the little vessel, and the disciples were at their wits end; but Jesus slept calmly through the howling of the wind, and the dashing of the waves. At last in despair they wakened him. "Master," they cried, "carest thou not that we perish?" "Why so frightened," he answered them, "O men of little faith?" He rose to his feet, rebuked the roaring wind, and said to the waves, "Peace, be still!" Immediately the wind dropped, and the waves sank to rest, and a great calm fell upon the lake. His disciples were amazed, and terrified. "What sort of man is this," they whispered to one another, "that even the winds and the sea obey him?"

So marvelling, they landed on the farther side of the lake in the territory of the Gergesenes. In the rocky hillside overlooking the waters, there were hewn tombs, and as Jesus and his disciples came up in the evening twilight from the shore, a dreadful figure came from these awesome homes of the dead. His eyes glared with the fire of madness, his body streamed with blood from many gaping gashes, broken chains hung and clattered about his wrists and ankles, and as he came, he shouted and shrieked and gashed his flesh again and again with a sharp stone. Night and day he had dwelt there with the dead among these lonely hills; none could tame him; chains he broke like straw; his shrieks and his ferocity made a terror about the place. This night he was to find his Master. As he rushed down on the little company, a sudden change fell upon his spirit. Down he flung himself on his knees before Jesus, and a voice that was like no human voice cried aloud, "What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God! I charge thee, by God, that thou torment me not!" Jesus looked pityingly upon the ghastly figure crouching there in the dim light. "What is thy name?" he said quietly.

The maniac reared his tortured, disfigured face to the calm eyes that seemed to look into his very soul. "My name is Legion," he

said, "for we are many." High on the slope above the lake, a great herd of two thousand swine were feeding; the madman looked to them, and all the insane passions of his soul rebelled against being cast out. "Send us not away out of our own land," the man cried, as though the Legion of passions in him spake by his lips. "Send us into the swine." Jesus raised his hand. "Come forth out of the man," he said. At that moment a strange terror swept across the great herd of beasts. There was a wild stampede down the steep slope to the cliff's edge, a thunder of thousands of racing feet, and the whole herd plunged into the waters and perished. The madman sank down at Jesus' feet, a wild beast no longer, but a man, sane and sound, and his Healer bade cover him with a cloak.

Meanwhile the swineherds, whose charge had thus suddenly been destroyed, fled in terror to Gergesa, and told of the strange things that were happening by the lake-side. The whole village and all the farm folk around came streaming out to the spot where Jesus stood with his disciples. There, at the Healer's feet, sat the madman who had been the terror of the neighbourhood, clothed and sane. Great fear fell on all the company, and it grew as they heard the story of the man's healing and the destruction of the swine. Jesus, they felt, was a guest too great and too mysterious for them; and they begged him to depart and leave them in peace.

Sadly the Saviour turned back again to the boat; but as he went, the man whom he had healed followed him, begging to be allowed to go with his Healer. "Nay," said Jesus gently, "go home to thy friends, and tell them the great things that the Lord hath done for thee, and the mercy He hath shown thee." So the man departed, and spread abroad through all the ten towns the tale of his healing; and all men marvelled.

Crossing the lake again, Jesus came to Capernaum; and when the people saw his boat drawing to the land, a great company gathered to meet him. Pressing through the crowd came one of their chief men, a ruler of the synagogue, Jairus by name. He fell down at the Saviour's feet. "Master," he said, "my little daughter lieth at death's door. Come, and lay thy hands on her, that she may be healed and live." Jesus turned and went with him,

and behind the two came the crowd, pressing and thronging to see what new wonder would befall. Now there was a woman in Capernaum who for twelve years had been vexed with sore sickness. Many physicians she had tried, spending on them all that she had; yet she was nothing the better, but her sickness grew ever sorer. She heard that Jesus was in the town, and, thrusting her way through the crowd, she came behind him, and touched the blue fringe of his cloak, saying to herself, "If I may but touch his clothes, I shall be healed." Forthwith she felt the change; her sickness was stayed, and she was whole and strong again. Jesus felt that power had passed from him, and, turning round in the midst of the throng, he said, "Who touched my clothes?" "Master," said Peter, "the multitude throng thee and press thee; and sayest thou, 'Who touched me?'" "Nay," said Jesus, "somebody hath touched me; for I feel that power has gone forth from me." As he looked round, the woman came trembling, and bowed low before him, and told what she had done, and how the touch of his robe had healed her. "Daughter," said the Saviour gently, "be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace."

While the words were yet on his lips, there came one running from the house of Jairus. "Thy daughter is dead," he said to the ruler, "trouble not the Rabbi any further." Jesus turned to the sorrowing father. "Be not afraid," he said, "only believe." Signing to the rest to stand back, he took with him Peter, and James, and John, and hastened to the house of Jairus. There all was confusion and grief; the hired mourners had come and were filling the house with their lamentations. Their clamour irked the Saviour. "Why make ye this ado, and weep?" he said. "The maid is not dead, but sleepeth." At that strange word, a mocking laugh ran round the room. The girl was dead, sure enough. Jesus wasted no words upon the mockers. Clearing the room of them all, he took the girl's father and mother, and his three disciples, and passed into the inner chamber, where the maiden lay white and cold upon her bed. He stooped over the still figure, and took the little hand in his own. "My little girl," he said softly, "rise up!" Forthwith her spirit returned, and she arose. "Give her

somewhat to eat," he said, as they stood amazed; and he bade them let no man know of what had been done.

Another day there came to him in Capernaum some of the headmen of the town, bearing a request from a centurion of the Roman garrison. This man's servant, who was dear to him, was sick and like to die; and he pled with Jesus to come and heal him. Roman as he was, the elders said, he was worthy of help—"For he loveth our nation, and hath built us a synagogue." Jesus went with them; but on the way there met him other friends of the centurion with a further message. "Trouble not thyself, Lord," he said, "for I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof, wherefore I come not myself to entreat thee. Speak but a word, and my servant shall be healed. For though I myself am but a subordinate, I know what command means. I have soldiers under me; I say unto one 'Go,' and he goeth; and to another 'Come,' and he cometh, and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he doeth it. So shall thy word be obeyed." When Jesus heard that message, he marvelled. "Truly," he said to the men about him, "I have not found so great faith as this, no, not in Israel!" And when the centurion's messengers returned to the house, lo! the servant that had been sick was whole and strong again.

The next day there befell another wonder. Jesus went forth from Capernaum and travelled southwards, past Mount Tabor, towards Nain, and a great crowd went after him. As they drew near to the village gate, a sad company came forth. In the midst of it walked a weeping woman, clad in widow's garb, and beside her the dead body of her only son was borne upon a bier. The Saviour's heart was touched at her lonely sorrow. "Weep not," he said to her, and, laying his hand upon the bier, he bade the bearers stand still. "Young man," he said to the silent figure, "I bid thee rise." Thereat the dead man sat up, and began to speak; and Jesus restored him to his mother. All men feared at that strange sight. "Truly," they said, "a great prophet is risen among us. God hath visited His people."

So Jesus went about among the towns and villages of Galilee, teaching in the synagogues, and telling the good news of the Kingdom of God, healing the sick, making the blind to see, and

the dumb to speak. His tender heart was touched with pity for the people, for he saw that they were weary and perplexed, wandering aimlessly through life, like sheep without a shepherd. "Truly," he said once to his friends, "the harvest is plenteous, but the labourers are few. Pray ye the Lord of the harvest, that He may send forth labourers into the harvest fields."

(7) AN EVIL WOMAN'S VENGEANCE

THE fame of these doings of Jesus went abroad through all the land, till it came even to the ears of the vile King, Herod Antipas. Herod trembled when he heard of the wonders that were done, and the ghost of his greatest sin rose up to trouble him. "John, whom I beheaded," he said, "is risen from the dead!" For during these days of the Lord's work in Galilee, John's noble life had come to a dark end in Herod's black castle of Machaerus by the Dead Sea. It happened in this wise.

Herod had taken away the wife of his brother Philip, and was living with her. Herodias was her name—a worthy mate for such a man. When the Baptist heard of this new infamy, he spoke boldly to the King. "It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife." His courage sealed his fate, for Herodias marked him for death from that day forward. Yet for a time she could not work her wicked will on him; for the truth and bravery of John mastered the wavering will of Herod, so that he listened eagerly when the Baptist spoke, and was much perplexed in his own mind. Knowing that Herodias meant to compass the death of the man who had dared to cross her path, he shut John up in the dungeon of his castle of Machaerus, hoping thus to keep him safe from dagger or poison. But Herodias bided her time, and nursed her wrath till the convenient season should come to let it loose.

Meanwhile John lay in prison, and pined for the free air of the wilderness, and the sunlight; and his spirit drooped and grew weary. Now and again there came to him rumours of the work that was being done by the man whom he had hailed as the Lamb

of God; but it was not the stern work of winnowing and cleansing by fire which John had dreamed of, and his mind was sore perplexed.

At last he sent two of his disciples to Jesus, that he might hear the best or the worst at once, and be sure. "Art thou He that should come," such was the message he gave them, "or do we look for another?" Jesus said nothing to them for a while, but went on with his work among the sick folk who had gathered round him. At last, when he had made an end of healing for the day, he turned to John's disciples. "Go back, and show John the things ye have heard and seen today. The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And say to him, 'Blessed is the man to whom I am not a stone of stumbling.'" So the men turned again to tell their master all the wonder of the work of Jesus; and John's troubled heart found rest and peace once more.

But ere long the prisoner was to find release by the swift and sudden stroke of death. It fell out that on his birthday King Herod gave a great feast to all his lords and high captains and the men of chief estate in Galilee. The feast was at its height, and men's hearts were glad with wine, when the princess Salome, daughter of Herodias, came forth in all her youthful beauty, and danced before the guests like one of the wanton dancing girls whom men hired to entertain them. Never had such a sight been seen as this of a princess making a show of her loveliness and grace, and King Herod, flushed with wine, was wild with delight. With a great oath he swore to the wanton girl. "Ask what thou wilt," he cried, "and it shall be given thee—unto the half of my kingdom"—though his kingdom was not his to give. Salome and Herodias had planned the trap before, and when the princess ran back to her mother to tell her what the King had sworn, the answer of Herodias came swift and venomous, "Ask for the head of John the Baptist, girl."

Salome came back into the hall, and stood before the wine-sodden King. "I will that thou give me at once," she said (and all strained their ears to hear what her request might be), "the

head of John the Baptist on a salver." At these dreadful words, tenfold more dreadful falling from the lips of a young girl, Herod's madness of the moment fell from him. He saw the snare into which Herodias had lured him, and his heart stood still. Even now he might have broken through the toils, and shaken himself free of the vile women who had dragged him to the edge of the abyss; but the craven dared not claim his freedom. His guests had heard his oath. How could he break it before them, and shame his wife and her daughter? Slowly and reluctantly he raised his hand, and made the fatal sign to the captain of his guard; and ere long a soldier came back from the dungeon with a dreadful burden,—the bleeding head of him whom Jesus had called the greatest of men born of woman. Her ghastly reward was put into the hands of that shameless girl, and she hastened with it to her mother, that Herodias might gloat in evil triumph over the one man whom she feared.

So ended the great forerunner of the Redeemer; and when John's disciples heard that their master had perished, they came and begged his body from the conscience-haunted King, and gave it seemly burial. Then they went to Jesus and told him all that had befallen their master.

(8) "BREAD OF THE WORLD, AND BREAD OF LIFE.

NOW when Jesus heard of the death of John, he was minded to go apart with his disciples into a quiet spot on the other side of the Sea of Galilee, that he and they might rest a while and think; but the country folk would not have it so. For when they heard that he was gone, they flocked from all the towns and villages around the lake, and trudged by the lake-side, till they were gathered, a great multitude of five thousand men, besides women and children, waiting for the Great Leader when he came ashore. Spite of his weariness and sorrow, the Saviour's heart was touched by their eagerness; and all that day,

THE FEEDING OF THE FIVE THOUSAND.
(Matthew, xiv. 19.)

EVANGELICAL SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

instead of resting, he moved about among them, speaking words of comfort and cheer, and healing those who were sick.

The crowd had forgotten, in their excitement, about the long miles that lay between them and home; but as the sun sank westwards and the shadows lengthened, the disciples came to their Master with anxious faces. "This is a desert place," they said, "and the night is drawing in. Send the folk away to the villages round about, that they may buy themselves somewhat to eat." Jesus looked at them with a smile on his face. "Why send them away?" he said. "Give ye them something to eat." Then turning to Philip, he said, "Come, Philip, where shall we buy bread that these may eat?" Matter-of-fact Philip ran his eye over the great company and did a little piece of arithmetic in his mind. "Two hundred pennyworth of bread would not be enough," he said, "for everyone to get even a morsel." (The Roman denarius, of which Philip spoke, was about equal in value to sevenpence halfpenny of our money.)

Andrew had an idea, though he could scarcely see much hope in it. "There is a lad here," he said, "who has five barley loaves, and two small fishes—but what are they among so many?" "Make the people sit down," said Jesus quietly. The disciples went up and down ranging the wondering folks into little companies of fifty and a hundred, till the whole hillside looked like a gay garden, with the many-coloured robes against the green grass.

Then the Saviour look the loaves into his hands. Looking up to heaven, he gave thanks to his Father for His mercies, and then began to break the bread, and divide the fish. The disciples took them from his hands, and distributed them among the people, and each, as he came back empty-handed to his Master, found a fresh store awaiting him. With growing wonder the multitude watched the disciples going and coming, until at last everyone had eaten and was satisfied.

Jesus looked round, when all had had enough. "Gather up the fragments that remain," he said, "that nothing be lost." When this had been done, lo! there were twelve baskets full of what was left over—far more than the whole supply at the beginning.

So great a wonder filled the hearts of all the vast crowd with excitement, and with great hope. He who could do such a thing, must he not be the great Prophet for whom their nation had been looking so long, the Prince of the house of David, who should break the Roman yoke from off their shoulders? Jesus saw that in their hearts there was growing up the resolve to force him to declare himself their leader, and to make him king. At once he bade his disciples launch their boat and set out for the other side of the lake, while he remained behind to dismiss the excited people. Then, when the last loiterers of the crowd had faded away into the deepening darkness, he turned and went up the hillside to be alone under the stars, with his Father in heaven.

Meanwhile on the lake below the disciples' boat was heading through the darkness for Capernaum. A great wind had risen and came roaring down the valleys of the hills ahead, lashing the water into foam, and the disciples toiling wearily at their oars could make no headway. Then through the darkness just before the dawn, they saw a wonderful sight. Behind them there came a mysterious white figure, walking, it seemed, on the tossing waves, now hidden for a moment by the crest of some great billow, now plain to sight again as their own boat swung aloft on the wave, but swiftly drawing nearer to them. Their hearts sank within them, for they thought that this must needs be the spirit of the lake come to claim his prey; but as they cried out in their terror, a familiar voice sounded clear above the roar of wind and wave, "Be of good cheer; it is I: be not afraid." "Lord, if it be thou," shouted back Peter, "bid me come unto thee on the water." "Come then," said Jesus, and Peter sprang over the gunwale into the raging water. Then his hasty courage failed him as he felt the great waves heaving under his feet, and the blast shrieking in his ears, and as he sank, he cried in terror, "Lord, save me." In a moment the strong hand of Jesus caught his foolhardy servant. "O thou of little faith," he said gently, "why didst thou doubt?" So they twain came up into the boat again, and at once the raging wind fell and the sea grew calm, and lo! almost ere they knew it, they were at the shore. The awe-struck disciples gathered around their Master on the beach, and bowing low before him in worship,

as they had never done before, they said, "Truly, thou art the Son of God;" nor did Jesus decline their homage.

Next morning the crowd quickly realised that in some way or other Jesus had returned to the other side of the lake near Capernaum; and taking whatever boats they could find they went in search of him. "Master," they said to him when they had found him, "when camest thou hither?" But the heart of Jesus was heavy. He knew that the time had come to open their eyes to the fact that the kingdom which he sought to set up was a very different one from that of which they were dreaming; and he knew that they would never understand or sympathise with his aims. So now his own words must destroy the popularity that his wonderful deed had created, and he must sift out those who really cared for him from those who only followed him for the wonders and the bounties that they craved. Sadly he answered them, "Of a truth, I tell you, ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled. Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that which endureth into everlasting life."

Then he went on to tell them that the bread of which he spoke was the food of the soul, not of the body. "I am the Bread of Life," he said. "He that cometh unto me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." But the thought of the bread of the soul was strange and unwelcome to their worldly minds; and when he told them that he came down from heaven to give his life for the life of the world, some of them openly scoffed at his claim. "Is not this Jesus, the Son of Joseph," they said, "whose father and mother we know? What is this that he says about coming down from heaven? What was this strange thing he said about giving his flesh for their food? This is an hard saying," they murmured among themselves. "Who can hear it?" So bit by bit, from this time, the crowd that had followed him through Galilee melted away, and he was left with none but his own disciples who had been with him from the first.

Though he knew that it was better so, the Saviour's heart was heavy when he saw how few had stood the test. He turned to the twelve, wondering perhaps if even they cared only for earthly

things. "Will ye also go away?" he said sadly. But Simon Peter was true, though he might sometimes be hasty and reckless. "Lord, to whom shall we go?" he answered. "Thou hast words of eternal life, and we believe and we know that thou art Christ, the Son of the living God." That answer, you may be sure, was balm to their Master's wounded spirit; but even as the words were still sounding in his ears, his eye caught one dark, sullen face among the twelve—the face of a man who was no longer true to his Lord, though he knew not how to break from him—the face of Judas of Kerioth, already half-traitor in his heart. And the answer of Jesus to Peter's brave confession was heavy with the foreboding of coming sorrow. "Have not I chosen you, the Twelve?" he said. "And one of you is a devil."

So ended the days of Christ's brief popularity among the men of Galilee, in disappointment and desertion. Henceforward, to the end, his chief work was to be simply the training of his own little band of followers.

(9) A HEATHEN WOMAN AND HER FAITH

OW after this time of excitement and disappointment in Galilee, Jesus craved for rest and quiet; and so he left his own land, and fared eastwards with his disciples into the heathen lands of Tyre and Sidon, where the Phœnicians dwelled, the worshippers of Baal and Astarte. But even there work called to him, and he could not close his heart to its appeal. There came to him a Greek woman of the land, in great trouble; for her daughter was possessed by an evil spirit. She fell down at the Great Healer's feet, and besought him to cast out the demon. "Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David," she cried, "my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil."

For once in his life, Jesus seemed hard and cold. It seemed as though he had not heard the pitiful appeal, for he answered not a word, but strode forward on his path, with the woman following,

beseeching and entreating his mercy. Even the disciples were moved, partly, perhaps, by her misery, more by the annoyance of her persistence. They would have had their Master grant the request, that they might be rid of her. "Send her away," they said, "for she crieth after us." But still the Saviour seemed pitiless, and, when he spoke, it was only to discourage any hope of help. "I am not sent," he said, "but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Still, he had spoken; and at the sound of his voice the woman drew near and made obeisance before him. "Lord help me," she cried. Then he spoke again—a cruel and bitter word it must have seemed to his disciples. "It is not meet," he said, "to take the children's bread, and to cast it to the dogs."

Perhaps the Twelve wondered what sudden change had come over their Master, to make him so unlike his usual gentle and merciful self. But Jesus had read the woman's heart. He was only wishing to test her, and make her show all the courage and faith that he knew she possessed. She caught at what seemed the insult he had flung at her. "Dog, if you like," she answered, "yet even the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table." And at that word Jesus turned on her a face of wonderful love and gladness. She had shown herself worthy of his judgment of her. "O woman," he said, "great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt." And in that hour, her daughter was healed.

From Phœnicia Jesus turned eastwards again and travelled towards his own homeland visiting the Greek towns that men called "The Ten Cities." As he went, wonders and signs accompanied him; for in one place he healed a man who was deaf and dumb, and at Bethsaida (fish-town), by the lake-side, he opened the eyes of a blind man. About this time it seemed as though some of his former fame were returning, for the news of his works of healing was noised abroad, and great multitudes gathered about him once more to hear and see. Once again, also, he fed a great gathering of four thousand folk with seven loaves, even as he had fed the five thousand before. But spite of the wonders and the crowds, the clouds of the coming storm were gathering around the Saviour. Ever the Scribes and Pharisees hated him with a deadlier hatred, as they sought vainly to entrap him, and heard the

words of burning scorn with which he denounced their hypocrisy and their worldliness. And the time was quickly coming when their hate would have its way.

(10) THE GLORY ON THE MOUNT

JESUS knew only too surely that his time on earth was now to be but short; and he was fain to prepare his friends for the blow that must fall on them so soon. Once and again he had told them, by hints and parables, of the time when he would be taken away from them; but now he must speak more plainly, that they might know what lay ahead, and perhaps he found it hard. Ere he spoke he led them away northwards from the familiar scene around the Sea of Galilee, till they drew near to where Hermon lifts its mighty mass against the sky, and the city Cæsarea, that is called Cæsarea of Philip, lies under its shadow. There in that mountain land where Jordan has its source, he asked the Twelve, "Whom do men say that I am?" The crowd had many names for him. "Some say that thou art John the Baptist," said the disciples, "and some, that thou art Elijah, and some, that thou art Jeremiah, or one of the prophets."

Then Jesus looked straight in their eyes, and put the question that should prove how much they had learned to understand their Master during their companying with him. "You—" he said, "what do you say?" And the disciples met the test. Often they were slow and dull; but at least they had come to understand something of Him with whom they dealt. Simon Peter, ever the first, spoke for them. "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God." The heart of Jesus was glad at that answer. "Blessed art thou, Simon, son of Jona," he said, "not from any earthly teacher didst thou learn this, but from my Father which is in heaven. And to thee I say: Thou art Peter, the man of rock, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

So, having proved them, and found them true, he began to tell

them of all the bitter trial that lay before him and them—how he must go to Jerusalem to meet his destiny, and there suffer at the hands of the priests and rulers, and be slain, and rise again from the dead on the third day. Never had he spoken so plainly to them before, and the Twelve were aghast. Peter broke out in his rough fisherman fashion, "God have mercy on thee, Lord, this shall not be unto thee!" Then in a moment he shrank back cowed and abashed, for Jesus turned on him with swift and sharp rebuke. "Get thee behind me, Satan," he cried, "thou art a stumbling-block unto me; for thou regardest not the things of God, but the things of men." For, doubtless, Peter's rough words had brought another whisper of temptation to his Master's sorely tried heart, just as in those early days in the wilderness, when he drove the Tempter from his face.

Then, quietly and simply, he went on to tell them how the only way by which they could follow him was the way of sacrifice, by which he was going himself. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it."

About a week after he had thus warned them of his coming death, Jesus took with him three of the Twelve, Peter, and James and John, and led them up into the lonely heights of the great mountain. There, while he prayed, a great and wonderful change came upon him. As the three disciples watched their Lord, heavy sleep overcame them; and when they wakened, lo! his face shone with a heavenly light, and his garments were white and glistening. Beside him there stood two radiant and majestic figures, and the awe-stricken beholders knew that these were Moses and Elijah. They were talking with the Lord, and their words were of the death of sacrifice which lay before him at Jerusalem. Just as these heavenly visitants were departing, Peter broke the spell of wonder that had held him and his companions. "Lord," he cried, "it is good for us to be here: let us make three booths, one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah." But in truth he knew not what he was saying.

Even while he spoke, a shining cloud covered the Lord and the

twain who stood beside him; and the disciples' hearts were filled with fear as the bright veil wrapped them about. Then out of the cloud came the sound of a voice from heaven. "This is My beloved Son; hear ye him." At that sound the disciples fell in terror on their faces, till their Master came and laid his hand upon them, saying, "Arise, and be not afraid."

Then they lifted up their eyes, and behold, Jesus stood before them once more, alone. As they came down the mountain-side he warned them to tell no one of what they had seen, until the time when he should have risen again from the dead.

So Jesus and his three followers came down together from the Holy Mount. As they drew near to the spot where they had left the rest of the Twelve, they found a great crowd gathered. In the midst of it were the disciples, flushed and worried-looking, and around them stood a group of Scribes, arguing with them, and jeering at their perplexity. Beside them stood a man worn and sad-looking, whose hand was on the shoulder of a sickly-looking boy. The appearance of Jesus broke up the dispute, for as soon as they saw him many of the crowd came running to meet him, and saluted him.

Jesus stepped quietly up to the group of triumphant Scribes. "What question ye with them?" he asked. The Scribes made no answer, for they realised that the coming of Jesus had robbed them of their victory; but the man with the boy by his side spoke up. "Master," he said, "I have brought here my son who hath a dumb spirit. Whenever the spirit seizeth him, it dasheth him down; and he foameth at the mouth, and grindeth his teeth, and pineth away; and I asked thy disciples to cast out the demon; but they could not." Jesus was vexed, both at the failure of his friends and at the malicious joy with which the Scribes had taken advantage of it. "O faithless race," he said, "how long shall I bear with you? Bring him to me."

Even as they led the boy to Jesus, the fit of epilepsy came sore upon him. He tore his flesh with his hands, and flung himself on the ground, and wallowed there, foaming at the mouth. The Saviour turned to his father. "How long is it since this came upon him?" he asked. "From his childhood," said the man sadly.

"SUFFER THE LITTLE CHILDREN."
(Mark. x. 14.)

"And often it has cast him into the fire, and often into the water, to destroy him; but if thou canst do anything, have mercy upon us, and help us."

Jesus looked him in the face. "*If* thou canst!" he said. "All things are possible to him that believeth."

At that word a faint gleam of hope shone through the poor father's darkness. Was it possible that his son might yet be cured? "Lord," he cried out, the tears running down his face, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." The Saviour turned to the tortured figure rolling on the ground at his feet. "Thou dumb and deaf spirit," he said, "I bid thee come out of him, and enter no more into him!" At that word a last dreadful spasm passed over the boy, and then he lay like one dead. Some in the crowd drew near, and looked at the white, spent face, and the nerveless limbs. "He is dead," they whispered. But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he stood upon his feet, weak and dazed indeed, but sound in mind and body.

The disciples waited till they were alone with their Master in the house where they were lodging. Then they came to him, and asked him, "Why could not we cast out the evil spirit?" "Because of your unbelief," he answered. "For had ye faith, even as a grain of mustard seed, ye should say to this mountain," and he pointed to great Hermon towering above them, "'remove hence,' and it should remove. Nothing would be impossible to you. But this kind only comes out by prayer."

(11) JESUS AND HIS FRIENDS

IN these last days in Galilee, the Lord was very busy with the training of his disciples' minds, trying to turn them from their foolish, narrow, worldly way of looking at things, and to teach them to see and judge as he did. They were often slow scholars, often they misunderstood him, and often what he said was quite beyond them; but still they remembered, and bit by bit their minds grew more like his, and in

the after days they saw, with a new light and a clearer understanding, many things that had seemed dark and strange to them before.

One day as they were journeying to Capernaum, he noticed that they were arguing rather hotly among themselves. When they had reached their house, he said to them, "What were ye disputing about by the way?" They were ashamed to answer him; for they had been wrangling about which of them should be greatest in their Master's Kingdom that they were so sure was coming. He sat down, and called them around him. Then he took one of the little children of the house, holding him in his arms, lest the little one should be frightened. "If any man desires to be the first," he said, "the same shall be last, and servant of all. Of a truth I say unto you, Except ye be changed, and become as this little child, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whoever shall be humble, like this little child, he is greatest in the kingdom; and whoever shall welcome one such little child, in my name, welcometh me. But whoever shall make one of these little ones to stumble, it were better for him that a great millstone were tied about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depths of the sea."

Another day Peter came to his Master with a question. "Lord," he said, "how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Until seven times?" No doubt the last thing Andrew would have dreamed of was to sin against his brother; but Peter was curious, and wanted to know. "Not until seven times," answered Jesus, "but until seventy times seven," which meant really that one must never cease to forgive. Then he told one of his picture-stories. "There was a King," he said, "who was reckoning with the servants who governed his provinces, and among them was a man who owed his master ten thousand talents. So vast a sum, more than two million pounds, of course he could not pay. Therefore the King gave order that he and all his family and all that he possessed should be sold, that payment might be made. In despair the wretched man fell down before the throne. 'Lord have patience with me,' he cried, 'and I will pay thee all.' The King's heart was touched with pity for the poor creature

grovelling before him, and there and then he forgave him, and cancelled the debt.

"As the man went out from the King's presence, he met a fellow servant who owed him a trifling little sum of two or three pounds. Mercilessly he caught him by the throat, crying, 'Pay me what thou owest.' His fellow servant fell down at his feet, as he himself had done a few minutes ago before the King's throne, and pled with him in the very words which he had used—'Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.' But instead of showing mercy, as mercy had been shown to him, the hard-hearted wretch cast the poor man into prison, till the debt should be paid.

"Those who saw his harshness came with great disgust to the King, and told him what was done. In fierce anger, the King summoned the merciless man before him. 'Thou wicked servant,' he cried, 'I forgave thee all that debt, because thou pleddest with me—shouldst not thou have had mercy on thy fellow servant, as I had mercy on thee?' So saying, he gave him up to the executioners, to be imprisoned and beaten until every farthing of his great debt was paid." "So," said Jesus, at the end of his story, "shall my heavenly Father do to you, unless each one of you heartily forgives whatever wrong his brother may do against him."

Thus, by example and by parable, Jesus led his friends away from their old ways of thinking and judging, and taught them truer, broader, and gentler ways, like his own. And almost beyond everything else he tried to teach them the power of prayer, and how the great heart of God, whom he had taught them to call "Our Father in Heaven," was full of mercy and love to His children, so that He was always ready to listen to their prayers, and give them, not perhaps just what they asked, but what He knew to be best for them. "Ask, and it shall be given you," he said; "seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."

Men, he used to say to them, must be really earnest in their prayers, and show that they are not easily discouraged, if they would gain their hearts' desire. And to help them to understand, he told them another of his vivid picture-stories. "One night," he said, "a man came knocking at the door of one of his friends at

midnight, when all were sound asleep. When he had wakened the folks within, he cried, 'Lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine has come to my house to rest on his journey, and I have nothing to offer him.' 'Trouble me not,' said the man within, none too well pleased at being thus awakened, 'my door is barred, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee.' But the man outside would take no refusal. He kept on knocking and pleading, until at last his churlish neighbour was glad to rise and give him all the bread he wanted to get rid of him."

Jesus did not mean, of course, that God was hard-hearted and unwilling to hear our prayers, but only that, like this man who came knocking at midnight, we must show that we really desire what we ask for. Once more he told them a story somewhat like this last one, to teach them that men ought to persevere in praying and not to grow weary. "There was a poor widow," he said, "in a certain city, who had been cheated and ill-used by one of her neighbours. She came before the judge of the town, and laid her case before him, saying, 'Avenge me of mine enemy.' But the judge was a hard and unjust man, who cared for nobody, neither God nor man, and he paid no heed to the cry of the widow. Yet she was not to be shaken off. Day after day, wherever he went, she came before him with her plea, 'Avenge me of my enemy.' By and by the judge began to grow tired of her continual coming. 'Though I care neither for God nor for man,' he said to himself at last, 'yet I will see justice done for her, lest I be wearied with her continual complaint!'"

"You hear," said Jesus, "what the unjust judge saith. Do you think that God will not do justice for His own chosen ones who cry day and night unto Him? I tell you he will avenge them speedily."

Then he taught them that if their prayers were to be answered, there must be no pride and self-righteousness in them, but that in God's presence they must needs be humble, remembering how unworthy they were. "Two men," he said, "went up into the Temple to pray,—the one, a Pharisee, the other a publican. The Pharisee stood in a conspicuous place where all could see and hear him, and he prayed thus with himself (for indeed he was not speaking to God, though he used God's name): 'God, I thank

Thee that I am not as other men are, cheats, unjust, impure,—or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give to Thee the tenth of all that I possess.' The publican stood in a far corner, with his head bowed, for he dared not lift his eyes to heaven, and he beat his breast, and said but one word, 'God be merciful to me a sinner!'"

"I tell you," said Jesus, "this man went down to his house more righteous than the other: for everyone that lifts himself up shall be brought low, but he that humbleth himself shall be lifted up."

(12) GOOD-BY TO GALILEE

AND now came the time when Jesus was to bid good-by for the last time to that land of Galilee which was so dear to him, and where he had done such great and wonderful things, and spoken words which will never be forgotten. The time for what was called the Feast of Tabernacles was drawing near. This feast was held in Jerusalem at the end of the harvest. People gathered from all parts of the land to the Holy City, and for seven days they camped in the hills around in little booths made out of the branches of trees, and made merry in memory of the time when their forefathers camped in the desert on the way to Canaan.

Now the brothers of Jesus did not, as yet, believe in him. Mary, his mother, knew something at least of his greatness; but his brothers, as often happens, could not understand how one who had been brought up with them, and with whom they had worked and played, could be much greater than themselves. So they came to him almost mocking at his claims. "Go up to the feast," they said, "and do thy great works where all the world can see them. No man who wants fame does things in a corner, as you do here in Galilee." Jesus answered them sadly, for his heart was sore at their want of trust in him. "My time is not yet come," he said, "but your time is always at hand. Go up to the feast yourselves; I am not going up to the feast yet."

So he let the merry caravans of light-hearted pilgrims go on their way, and then, when the roads were quiet and deserted once more, he started with the Twelve on his last journey from his homeland. He knew only too well what lay before him, and knew, too that he would never come back to the green, flower-spangled hillsides and the familiar roads, and never look again upon the Sea of Galilee sparkling in the sun—never, till his last great work was done, and he had passed through the gates of death. It cost him something to leave the old home, and to face all the sorrow and suffering that lay ahead; but he had made his choice, and he set his face steadfastly to go up to Jerusalem.

As he had done before, he took the straight road through Samaria, and he sent two of his disciples on ahead of him to arrange for a night's lodging for the little company in a Samaritan village. But at the sight of men travelling to Jerusalem, the old hatred between Samaritan and Jew flamed up in the villagers' hearts, and they answered churlishly that there was no lodging in their village for men who were going to Jerusalem. It was James and John, the sons of Thunder, as Jesus used laughingly to call them because of their hot tempers, who had been sent; and they came back to Jesus, furious at the insult which had been put upon them, and, above all, on their Master. "Lord," they said, "shall we command fire to come down from heaven and burn them all up as Elijah did with the captains and their fifties?" "Nay," said the Saviour gently. "Surely you do not understand what you mean. I am not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." So they turned aside to another village.

Now as they journeyed, there came a man eagerly offering himself as a disciple. "Lord," he said, "I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest." Jesus would have no man enter his service unless he had first counted the cost. "Do you know," he asked gently, "what following Me means? Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man hath nowhere to lay his head." He bade another follow him; but the man said, "Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father." "Let the dead bury their dead," said Jesus, "thou, who art alive, go thou, and preach the kingdom of God." Then said a third listener, "Lord, I will

follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell at home." And Jesus answered him, "No man who puts his hand to the plough, and then looks back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

Meanwhile the great crowds that were gathered in Jerusalem for the feast were eagerly discussing Christ, and wondering at his absence. Men's opinions were sharply divided with regard to him, for some said, "He is a good man," and others said, "Nay, but he deceiveth the people." But all the talk was in quiet, for the people knew that their rulers were watching for any sign of rebellion against their authority.

At last, about the middle of the week, Jesus quietly appeared in the Temple court, and began to teach. The people were amazed at his teaching, and still more at the fact that the priests and rulers did not venture to lay hands on him. "Is not this he whom they seek to kill?" they said one to another. "But lo! he speaketh openly, and they say nothing unto him. Can it be that the rulers know that this is none other than the Christ?" Many of the people believed, and said, "When Christ cometh will he do more miracles than those which this man hath done?"

The chief priests felt that they must assert their authority, and sent their Temple guard to lay hands on him and bring him prisoner; but the guards listened spellbound to the wonderful words that fell from his lips. They came back to their masters without their captive; and when the priests asked, "Why have ye not brought him?" they answered, "Never man spake like this man." The Pharisees were full of scorn. "Have ye also been led astray?" they cried. "Have any of the rulers, or of the Pharisees believed in him? But this ignorant rabble, who know not the law—they are accursed." Nicodemus (he who at the first came to Jesus by night), protested, "Doth our law judge any man before it hear him, and know what he doeth?" But the Pharisees had nothing but gibes even for a man so greatly learned and regarded as Nicodemus. "Thou also a Galilean?" they cried in bitter scorn. "Search the Scriptures, and learn that out of Galilee ariseth no prophet."

Now the last day of the feast was the greatest day of all. Special sacrifices were offered, and it was a day of great solemnity and

rejoicing. This day Jesus chose to declare himself as the Giver of Life and Light. It fell out on this wise. Every day during the week, the priests brought water in a golden ewer from the Pool of Siloam, and poured it, amid the pealing of silver trumpets and the waving of palm-branches, into a silver basin, which stood by the great altar of burnt-offering; and every night two great cressets flamed above the Temple courts, and cast their glare across the crowded city, to remind the pilgrims of how their fathers had been led in the wilderness by the pillar of fire.

These two things Jesus used as pictures of himself and his work. When the water from Siloam was poured forth and the trumpets rang out, his voice was suddenly heard crying, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth in me, from him shall flow rivers of living water." At that great word many of the people were stricken with awe. "Of a truth," they said, "this is the Prophet." But others could not believe that their Messiah should come out of Galilee. "Christ must come from Bethlehem, David's town," they said, forgetting, or ignorant, that from Bethlehem Jesus really did come. So the multitude was at odds with itself concerning him.

Then, at night, as the great cressets flared above the Temple courts, Jesus cried to the great crowd, "I am the Light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." And then he went on to tell them that he was the sinless Son of God, who had lived before their father Abraham in whom they trusted, and that he was one with God. But this was more than they could believe, and, holding him to be a blasphemer, they took up stones to stone him. But in the midst of their wild rage and tumult, he passed through the heart of the multitude, and went his way. He knew that now the die was cast, and that as Galilee would have none of him, so Jerusalem also had made its choice, and there was naught left for him but to die.

"WHAT LACK I YET?"
(Matthew, xix, 20.)

(13) THE BLIND MAN AND JESUS

ON the Sabbath of their stay in Jerusalem, Jesus and the Twelve were passing by, when they saw a man blind from his birth. "Master," said the disciples, "was it this man himself, or his parents, who sinned, that he should be born blind?" For the Jews held that when trouble came on any one, it was always because of some evil that had been done. "Neither did this man sin, nor his parents," the Saviour replied. "This blindness came upon him that the works of God might be made plain in him." Then he spat on the ground, and made clay, and, taking some of the clay, he rubbed it on the eyelids of the blind man, and said to him, "Go, wash in the Pool of Siloam." Never questioning, the blind man groped his way down to Siloam, and bathed his eyes there; and lo! at the touch of the water, sight was given to him, and he returned seeing clearly.

Everybody was amazed to see the wonder that had been wrought. "Is not this the man who sat and begged?" said some; and one would answer, "This is he," while others would say, "Well, he is like the man." But he himself, when he heard folks disputing about him, said, "I am the man." Then he told them how he had been healed, but when they asked him where his healer was he could not tell them.

So they took him before the Pharisees, and once again he was asked how he had received his sight. And when he told them how Jesus put clay on his eyes, and bade him wash in the Pool of Siloam, there was an outcry and a wrangle among them. Some said, "This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the Sabbath day;" but others answered, "How can a sinner do such miracles?" They turned to the man himself. "What do you think of this man who opened your eyes?" The answer came prompt and clear—"He is a prophet."

Still the Pharisees would not believe in the reality of the mir-

acle. They summoned the man's parents before them. "Is this your son, who was born blind?" they asked. "How, then, doth he now see?" But the parents were cautious, for they knew how the Pharisees hated Jesus, and they had heard that any one who confessed Jesus to be the Messiah was to be put out of the synagogue. "We know," they answered, "that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but how he now seeth, and who hath opened his eyes, we do not know; he is of age, ask him; he shall speak for himself." The Pharisees called the man again before them. "Give God the praise for thy healing," they said. "We know that this man is a sinner." "Whether he be a sinner or not, I know not," he answered stoutly, "one thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see."

Puzzled and amazed, they harked back to their old question—"What did he to thee? How opened he thine eyes?" And, losing patience at their stubborn stupidity, he answered them sharply, "I have told you already, and ye paid no heed. Why would ye hear it again? Will ye also be his disciples?" Such an insult was more than the Pharisees could stand. With supreme scorn they said to him, "Thou art his disciple; we are Moses' disciples. We know that God spake unto Moses, but this fellow—who knows whence he is?" But they were answered with a sharper scorn. "A marvellous thing, truly!" cried this stout-hearted beggar, "here is a man who hath opened mine eyes, and ye know not from whence he is. I can tell you. He is of God, for God doth not hear sinners, but good men He heareth. Never was such a thing heard from the beginning of the world as that a man should open the eyes of one born blind. If this man were not of God, he could do nothing."

The Pharisees had heard more than enough, and felt, no doubt, that they were cutting a very poor figure. They rose in holy wrath. "Dost thou teach us?" they cried. "Thou, born and bred in sin!" And they forbade him to enter the synagogue. Jesus heard that they had cast out this brave witness for him. He sought the man out, and when he had found him, he said, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" "Who is he, Lord, that I might believe in him?" "Thou hast both seen him," said

Jesus, "and it is he that talketh with thee." "Lord, I believe," said the man, and falling down before his healer, he worshipped him.

(14) A REST BEFORE THE BATTLE

THE healing of the blind man, and the discomfiture of the Pharisees which followed it, only provoked the enemies of Jesus to more bitter anger against him. Once and again they sought to stone him or to cast him into prison; and it was plain that to stay longer at this time in Jerusalem was to court danger and death. Jesus knew that in the end death would come to him; but he had still work to do before the night came. So he turned away from the stubborn, unbelieving city, which had ever had such privileges and opportunities, yet had been so unworthy of them. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem," he said, as he looked on his Father's town which was driving him out, "which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathereth her brood under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate; for truly I say unto you, 'Ye shall not see me again, until the time comes when ye shall say, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."'"

Then he left the Holy City to its unbelief, and travelled eastwards with the Twelve across Jordan, till he came to the familiar spot where John had been wont to baptise, and where he had hailed the Lamb of God. There in the district known as Peræa he spent a little while in quiet work and teaching—one last rest before the great whirlwind of strife should break upon him.

Even beyond Jordan the Pharisees followed him to wrangle and dispute with him and endeavour to ensnare him in his talk. But there were pleasanter things than that to record. Jesus was always the friend of the little children. He loved to watch them at their games, he told men that they must learn the child's spirit if they would enter the Kingdom of God, and he bade his

hearers beware of putting a stumbling-block in the way of any of the children. "For," he said, "in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my heavenly Father." And now, in Peræa, as elsewhere, the children loved to be near him. It fell out one day that some women of the district brought their children to him as he was teaching. They wanted him just to lay his hands upon the heads of the little ones, and to give them his blessing, so that in after days they might remember that they had seen the Great Healer; for they felt that the very touch of a man so good as Jesus must be precious.

The disciples were vexed when they saw the women and children approaching. They did not want their talk with Jesus to be interrupted, and they spoke sharply to the women, bidding them take the little ones away. It was not often that Jesus was angry, but that day he was much displeased with his disciples' stupid selfishness. "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not," he cried; "for of such is the kingdom of God. I tell you, of a truth, that the man who shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein." Then he called the children back to him, and as they gathered by his side, he took them, one by one, into his arms, laid his hands upon their heads, and gave them his blessing.

On another day, as he was leaving one of the Peræan towns, a man came running after him in great haste. He was young and richly dressed, but he threw all his pride to the winds, and kneeled down before the Saviour in the middle of the dusty road. He had a great question to put to Jesus. "Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" "Why callest thou me good?" said the Saviour. "Only one is good: that is God." Then he reminded him of the commandments: "Master," said the young man, "all these have I observed from my youth." Jesus looked down upon the eager, upturned face. He loved the man for his straight, clean manhood; but he saw the one weak point in his character. "One thing thou lackest," he said. "Go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give it to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the Cross, and follow me."

But at that word the face of the young man clouded over.

BLIND BARTIMÆUS.
(Mark, x, 46.)

He had great possessions, and it seemed too hard a thing for him to give up all that he had learned to love and to delight in, even for the sake of life eternal. Sadly he turned and went away; and Jesus watched him depart with a heart as sore as his own. Then with a sigh he turned to the Twelve, and said to them, "How difficult it is for those that have riches to enter into the kingdom of heaven!" And when he saw astonishment written on their faces, he repeated what he had said: "Children, how difficult it is for those who trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God!" "Who, then, can be saved?" said the disciples; for it seemed to them that heaven must be easier of entrance for great folks than for the poor and needy. "With men," said Jesus, "it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible." Peter, as usual, was curious. If following Christ was the condition of eternal life, had not they earned it? "Lo, we have left all and followed thee—what shall we have therefore?" Perhaps Jesus was sad to hear the ring of selfishness in Peter's question. Anyhow he bade him have a care of the spirit of his service, even while he promised him his reward. "No man," he said, "hath left aught for my sake, but he shall receive an hundredfold in this world, and in the world to come eternal life. But many that are first shall be last, and the last first."

Part IV. *The Story of the Cross and the Resurrection*

(1) JESUS AND HIS DEAD FRIEND

THERE were many houses in Judea where the Saviour was a welcome guest; but in the little town of Bethany, about two miles from Jerusalem, he had three friends who were very dear to him, and in whose home he loved to rest. The head of the house was Lazarus, and his two sisters were named Martha and Mary. Of Lazarus we know nothing, save for the one great wonder which Jesus wrought upon him; but Martha and Mary we can see very clearly. Martha was the busy housewife, kind and willing, eager to do all she could for her Master, but thinking more of making him comfortable than of listening to what he said; while Mary was quiet and thoughtful, eager to catch every word that fell from his lips.

Once when Jesus was coming to their house, Martha was eager to give him a fitting welcome, and was very busy with her preparations. Even when Jesus had arrived, and was sitting in the house talking to his friends, Martha was bustling about, getting everything ready for supper; but Mary stole quietly into the room where the men were gathered, and sat down at Jesus' feet, drinking in every word that he uttered. Martha was vexed with her sister for leaving her to serve alone, and at last she came to Jesus with her grievance. "Master," she said, "dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her help me, therefore." "Martha, Martha," said Jesus with a smile, "thou art anxious and troubled about many things; but only one thing is needful, and Mary hath chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her." But though the sisters were so different,

they and their brother were very dear to Jesus, and their house was the nearest thing to a home that he knew.

Now when he was resting on the eastern side of Jordan, there came a messenger in hot haste from the two sisters at Bethany, saying, "Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick." No doubt they expected that the Saviour would come at once to heal his friend; but Jesus took the news very quietly. "This sickness is not unto death," he said. "It has come for the glory of God and of his Son." And so saying, he remained two days longer in the place where the messenger found him.

On the third day he called his disciples, and said, "Let us go into Judea again;" but they were terrified at the very thought of facing the angry crowds from whom they had so lately escaped. "Master," they said, "the men of Judea were seeking to stone thee but the other day; and goest thou thither again?" "Our friend Lazarus is sleeping," he answered; "but I am going that I may awaken him." The disciples were puzzled. "Lord, if he is sleeping, he will get better," they said. Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead; and I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, that you may learn to trust me; yet let us go to him now." So they knew that it was vain to think of turning him from his purpose, and Thomas, who loved Jesus very dearly, but always looked at the dark side of things, spoke out what was in all their hearts. "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

So the little company crossed the Jordan again and came to Bethany, to find that Lazarus had been four days buried, and that all the friends of the family were gathered to comfort the two sisters in their sorrow. Someone quickly brought the news of the approach of Jesus to the darkened house, and when she heard that her Lord was coming, Martha rose and went out to meet him; but Mary sat still, alone with her grief. Martha greeted Jesus with a cry of bitter regret. "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. But I know that, even now, God will give thee whatsoever thou dost ask of Him." "Thy brother shall rise again," he answered. "Ah," she said, "I know that he will rise again in the Resurrection, at the last day." "I am the Resurrection and the Life," said Jesus. "He that believeth in me,

though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." Then he turned to the weeping woman at his side. "Believest thou this?" he said. Martha did not understand all that he meant. "Yes, Lord," she said, "I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world."

Then, leaving Jesus, she hastened back to her house, and called her sister. "The Master is come, and calleth for thee," she said. At that word Mary rose quickly and came to him, followed by her friends who imagined that she was going to weep over her brother's grave. As soon as she saw Jesus, she fell down at his feet, with the same cry of anguish that had come from her sister's lips. "Lord, if thou hadst been here my brother had not died." Her sorrow and the sorrow of her friends wrung the Saviour's heart. "Where have ye laid him?" he asked. "Lord, come and see," they said; and as they looked at him, they saw the tears running down his cheeks. "Behold, how he loved him," said some of them; but others thought that if his love had been so great he might have done more for his friend. "Could not this man, who opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even Lazarus should not have died?"

So Jesus, still shaken with sorrow, came to the grave of his dead friend. It was a cave in the rocks, and its entrance was closed by a great round slab of stone, and this he bade them roll away. "Master," said Martha, "by this time corruption has begun; for he has been dead four days." "Did I not tell thee," he answered, "that if thou wouldst believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God?"

Then they rolled the stone away, and the black depths of the tomb appeared. Jesus raised his eyes to heaven, and gave thanks to God; then with a loud voice he cried, "Lazarus, come forth!" All men held their breath at that word; and then within the black mouth of the cave there was a rustle, and a movement, and a white figure came forth, swathed from head to foot in grave clothes, his limbs moving stiffly in those awful bonds. "Loose him," said Jesus to the wondering bystanders, "and let him go."

When they saw that mighty sign, many of the Jews that had come to mourn with Mary and her sister believed on Jesus; but

others went their way to the Pharisees, his old enemies, and told them what had been done. The chief priests and the Pharisees, united in hatred of the Saviour, though in all else they were enemies, summoned the Council of the Seventy. "What are we doing?" they said. "For this man worketh many wonders. If we let him alone, soon the whole nation will be following him; and then the Romans will come, and make an end of us, priesthood and nation alike." There was one man among them, Caiaphas, the High Priest, who sat looking on with contempt while they sought this way and that for a path out of their difficulty. At last he spoke. "Pretty counsellors ye are," he said. "Ye know nothing. Can you not see that it is better for one man, this one man, to die, than that the whole nation should perish?" False knave though he was, that word came not of the High Priest's own thought. God spake by his cruel lips, and declared how Jesus should die for his people, ay, and to gather into his Father's fold not only his own people, but all God's children scattered through the world.

From that day, therefore, the rulers were firmly purposed in their hearts to compass the death of Jesus. And so (till his own time should come), Jesus no more moved openly about, as was his wont, among the Jews, but betook himself to a village named Ephraim in the hill country near to the wilderness; and there he abode for a season with his disciples.

(2) THE LAST JOURNEY

OW Spring was bright over all the land, and with it came the great Passover Feast. Never had there been before, never would there be again, such a Passover; for it was the last that Jesus was to keep on earth, and when he had kept it, the need for the Passover would have passed away. So as the pilgrims from Galilee began to throng down the Jordan Valley, and through the fords at Jericho, on their way to the feast, Jesus and his disciples left their place of safety at Ephraim, and began the last journey to the Holy City.

It was a strange journey, not like the happy walks that the Twelve had had with their Master on the green hillsides of Galilee. For Jesus, when he spoke to them now, spoke only of suffering and shame and death that were awaiting him at Jerusalem; and though he spoke, too, of rising again from the dead, they were too bewildered and saddened to understand what he said. Often, too, their Master strode on ahead of them alone. That was not according to his wont; but there was something in his face that forbade them to break in upon his solitude. Astonished and full of forebodings they cowered behind him, feeling that their Lord had passed beyond their reach.

Yet even in this dark hour when his spirit was so sore troubled, Jesus could not deny himself to the call of need. They drew near to Jericho, and as they came towards the city gate a familiar cry fell upon their ears—"Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me." It was a blind man, Bartimæus by name, who was wont to sit by the wayside wrapped in his cloak, to beg of the passers-by. Someone had told him that the Great Healer was passing; and a great hope leaped up in his heart. As his cry rang out, some of the wayfarers bade him be silent, and not disturb the Rabbi, but the more they rebuked him the more he cried, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me."

Jesus stood still, and bade the man be brought to him, and the men who had been chiding him for troubling the Rabbi were now the readiest to commend him when the Rabbi took his part. "Be of good cheer," they said. "Rise up, and come, he is calling for thee." Bartimæus cast aside his long cloak, and groped his way to where the Saviour stood, waiting. "What wouldst thou have me do for thee?" said Jesus. "Lord," he cried, "that I might receive my sight!" "So be it," answered the Saviour, "go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole." And at that word the eyes of Bartimæus were opened so that he saw clearly, and with joy and praise he followed his healer into the city, while all the multitude gave glory to God for the wonder that they had seen.

Now as they passed through Jericho, with a great crowd accompanying them, there befell another strange thing. There was in the city a wealthy tax-gatherer named Zacchæus. He was eager

to see Jesus; but the crowd was so dense, that, being a little man, he could see nothing. Therefore he ran on ahead, and climbed, like a boy, into the branches of a sycamore tree by the wayside. When Jesus came by, he looked up and saw the eager face of the rich tax-gatherer. At once he stopped. "Zacchæus," he said, "haste thee, and come down; for today I lodge at thy house." Amazed and delighted, Zacchæus scrambled to the ground, and welcomed his self-bidden guest; but at once murmurs were heard among the crowd. "The Rabbi is gone to be guest with a man who is a sinner."

Zacchæus would not have Jesus shamed on his account. He faced the grumbling crowd. "Behold, Lord," he cried, "henceforth I give the half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I will restore it four times over." And Jesus set his seal upon the new resolve. "This day," he said, "is salvation come to this house, for Zacchæus also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

All was excitement in Jericho, and many who had seen the healing of Bartimæus were full of expectation that the Kingdom of God was going to come at once. Therefore Jesus spake a parable to warn them not to waste their time in dreaming of its coming, but to use wisely and well the time and opportunities they possessed. "A certain nobleman," he said, "was going into a far country to be crowned king, and to return. Before his departure he called ten of his servants to him, and gave to each of them a pound, saying 'Use it till I come.' But certain evil men among his subjects hated him, and sent a message after him—'We will not have this man to reign over us.' After a time he returned and called his ten servants before him, that he might learn what use they had made of his money. The first said, 'Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds.' 'Well done,' he answered, 'thou good servant. Thou hast been faithful over a very little—thou shalt have rule over ten cities.' 'Lord,' said the second, 'thy pound hath gained five pounds,' and to him he said, 'Be thou ruler over five cities.' Then came a third, and said, 'Lord, here is thy pound, which I have kept wrapped up in a napkin. For I feared

thee, because thou art a stern man.' But his lord answered him, 'Out of thine own mouth I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was a stern man. Why, then, didst thou not give my money to the bank, that at my coming I might receive it again with interest?'

"'Take the pound from him,' he cried to his servants, 'and give it him which hath ten pounds.' 'But, lord,' they said, 'he hath ten pounds already.' 'Yes,' he replied, 'and I tell you that to him that hath shall be given; but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. But those enemies of mine, which would not have me to reign over them, bring them hither, and slay them before me.'"

Meanwhile in Jerusalem there was great talk about Jesus. Men sought him among the crowds that were gathering in to the Passover, and as they walked in the Temple courts the question on every lip was—"What think ye? Will he not come to the feast?" His sleepless foes, the priests and Pharisees, were watching for him more eagerly than any, and they sent forth an order that, if any man knew where he was, he should make it known to the authorities, that they might seize him. But after their toilsome climb from the Jordan Valley, the Saviour and his disciples turned aside to Bethany, and there in the quiet home of his three dear friends, Jesus passed the Sabbath before the Passover—the last Sabbath before his death.

In Bethany his friends made a feast for him, in the house of Simon the Leper. Lazarus, whom he raised from the dead, sat there at meat beside his Lord, and Martha, as she was wont, was busy serving the guests; but Mary found another way to show her love. She brought an alabaster vase of very precious perfume and poured it on the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair; and the smell of the perfume filled the whole house. The disciples were puzzled and rather angry at her action, for it seemed to them sheer waste; and Judas Iscariot, of all men, broke out in rebuke. "Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?" he cried. It was not that he cared for the poor; but he was the treasurer of the Twelve, and had charge of their little store of money, and he was indignant at the thought

of so much that might have stuck to his pilfering fingers being spent on his Master.

Jesus turned sharply on the traitor. "Let her alone," he said. "Why trouble ye the woman? She hath wrought a beautiful work upon me. Ye have the poor always with you; me ye have not always. For when she poured the perfume upon me, she did it to anoint me for my burial. And I tell you that wherever my gospel is preached, there this also, which she hath done, shall be told in memory of her."

The news of Christ's coming to Bethany was noised abroad, and many people came to the little town, not only to see him, but to see Lazarus as well. So the chief priests, in their bitter hatred to Jesus, were minded also to slay Lazarus; for many believed in Jesus because of the great wonder that had been done in raising Lazarus from the dead.

(3) "BEHOLD, THY KING COMETH!"

EXT day Jesus sent forth two of his disciples, bidding them go to a village near at hand. There, he said, they would find an ass tied, and a young colt with her, that had never been ridden. "Loose them," he said, "and bring them to me. And if any one ask you why you do this, say, 'The Lord hath need of him;' and immediately he will send him." So the disciples went, and found the colt, as Jesus had said, tied by a house-door, at the meeting of the roads. So they loosed his halter, and as they were doing it, a man came up to them. "What are ye after, loosing the colt?" he asked. "The Lord hath need of him," they answered; and he let them go.

They brought the colt to Jesus, spreading a robe over its back for a saddle-cloth; and the Saviour mounted his humble steed. Many of the people spread their garments before him, to make a carpet for his entrance, others cut down branches of palm and silver-grey olive, and strewed the road with them as if for the coming of a conqueror; and the crowd that marched before or

after him shouted, "Hosanna! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord! Blessed be the kingdom of our father David that cometh in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" for they deemed that now of a surety the time was come when Jesus would declare himself king.

Some of the Pharisees were there in the crowd to spy upon their enemy, and when they heard the shouts, they turned angrily to the Saviour. "Master," they said, "rebuke thy disciples."

"I tell you," he answered, "that if these were silent, the stones would immediately cry out." The simple procession reached the crest of the Mount of Olives, and all the splendour of the city, Temple, and tower, and wall, burst upon the view. It was a sight to rejoice the heart; but Jesus checked his mount for a little, and as he gazed upon the fair show before him, his followers saw the tears running down his face. And then he spoke to Jerusalem as he had spoken before, "If thou hadst known, even thou, while the moment is still with thee, the things that belong to thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days are coming when thine enemies shall cast up earthworks around thee, and encircle thee, and beleaguer thee on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee. They shall not leave one stone of thee upon another; because thou didst not know when God visited thee."

Then the Saviour moved on again, and the shouting throng wound down the hillside, and up the slopes to the city gate. Even Jerusalem was moved with excitement as the crowd passed through the streets. "Who is this?" men said, one to the other; and the men of Galilee, proud, for the moment, of the sensation they were making, answered, "This is Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth in Galilee." Through the crowded ways of the city, Jesus passed up to the Temple hill, and into the courts of his Father's House. There for a while he looked round upon the busy scene, grieved to see how soon men had forgotten the lesson that he had given them when he cleansed the Temple in earlier days. Blind men and cripples gathered round him as he stood, and he healed them. The boys of the city had caught the excitement of the crowd, and groups of them shouted in the courts the cry that

they had heard ringing through the streets—"Hosanna to the Son of David!" But this was more than the priests could stand—to hear their enemy proclaimed in the very citadel of their power. "Hearest thou what these say?" they said to him angrily. "Yea," answered Jesus. "Have ye never read, 'Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise?'" When the evening was come, he slipped quietly out of the city in the twilight, and went back to Bethany to rest in the home of his dear friends there.

Next morning he came back again to the Temple courts; for it was in his mind to cleanse them once more, as he had done three years ago, of all the trafficking and cheatery that were defiling them. Again he drove out the cattle dealers and the sellers of doves, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers; and the men who were making a thoroughfare and short cut of the Temple court he turned back, and forbade them to carry their burdens through the Holy Place. "It is written," he said, "'My house shall be called the House of Prayer;' but ye have made it a den of thieves."

(4) JESUS AND HIS ENEMIES

MEANWHILE the priests and Pharisees were at their wits' end to know what to do. It seemed that the power and popularity of their great foe was greater than ever, and they were full of forebodings as to what the end might be. "See you not," they said to one another, "that we are making nothing of him? Behold, the world is gone after him." One effort, at least, they would make, and they fastened upon his cleansing of the Temple as their excuse. They came to him as he was teaching in the Court of the Gentiles, and put a question to him. "By what authority doest thou these things, and who gave thee this authority?" The crowd drew closer round, to hear what their prophet would answer. "I also will ask you one question," said Jesus, "and if ye answer it, I will tell you by what authority

I do these things. The baptism of John, whence was it, from Heaven, or of men?"

At that the faces of the priests fell, for Jesus had fairly put them on the horns of a dilemma. They drew aside for a little, and talked the matter over among themselves. "If we say, 'From Heaven,' he will ask us, 'Why, then, did ye not believe him?' But if we say, 'Of men,' then the people will stone us;" for they were all persuaded that John was a prophet. Sullenly they turned at last to the Saviour. "We cannot tell," they said; and he answered, "Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things."

Their attack had failed; but Jesus was not done with them yet. He had something to say to them about their own faithlessness in the task which God had entrusted to them. "What think ye?" he said. "A certain man had two sons. He came to the first, and said, 'Son, go work today in my vineyard.' 'I will not go,' said the son; but afterwards he came to a better mind, and went. To the second son he gave the same command; and he answered willingly and respectfully, 'I go, Sir!' but he went not. Which of these, think you, did the will of his father?" Again the priests saw that they were trapped; but there was no way out of a question so simple. "The first, of course," they said. And Jesus drove the lesson home. "Truly I say unto you, the tax-gatherers and outcasts go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came preaching righteousness, and ye would have none of him; but the tax-gatherers and outcasts believed him; and ye, even when ye had seen that, repented not, nor believed."

"Listen to another parable," he went on. "There was a householder who planted a vineyard, and made a hedge around it and digged a wine-press in it, and built a watch-tower, and let it out to vine-growers, while he himself went on a journey to a far country. Now when the vintage time came round, he sent his servants to the vine-growers to receive the rent of the vineyard. But his tenants laid hands on the messengers and beat one, and slew another, and cast stones at a third. A second time he sent other servants, more than before; but they treated them even as they had done the others. Last of all he sent his son; for he said to himself, 'They will respect my son.' But when the vine-growers

saw the son, they said, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours.' So they took him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him. Now, therefore, when the lord of the vineyard cometh, what will he do to these vine-growers?"

The Pharisees were silent; but the crowd answered for them. "He will miserably destroy those miserable men, and will let out his vineyard to others, who will give him his rent at the due time." Jesus turned to his foes. "Therefore I say unto you," he said, "The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation that will bring forth its fruit."

At that word the priests and Pharisees were filled with fury, for well they saw that he had spoken this parable of them. Fain would they have laid hands on him; but they feared the crowd, for all men believed him to be a prophet.

They went their ways to hatch other plots. This time they made an unholy alliance with the friends of Herod, the half-heathen Edomite King; and after consulting with them, they thought they had found a question which would either destroy the popularity of Jesus with the multitude, or bring him into conflict with the Roman power. They sent a number of their followers to him in the guise of honest men perplexed over a difficult matter. The clumsy hypocrites came to Jesus with great professions of respect and admiration. "Master," they said fawningly, "we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, caring nothing for the fear of men. Tell us, therefore, is it lawful to give tribute unto Cæsar or not?"

It was a cunning question. If Jesus said, "It is lawful," then all the patriots among the Jews, who hated the very thought of the Roman yoke, would forsake him. If he said, "It is not lawful," then they could accuse him to the Roman governor of trying to stir up rebellion. Jesus read the base craft of their hearts in a moment. "Ye hypocrites," he said with scorn, "why tempt ye me? Shew me the tribute money." Someone thrust a silver penny of the Romans into his hand, and he held it up before the crowd. "This image, and this inscription," he said, "whose is it?" "Cæsar's," came the answer. "Render, therefore, unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and unto God the things

that are God's." Beaten once more, but all the more set upon accomplishing his ruin, they turned away and left him for a while.

Now came the turn of the Sadducees, who hold that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit. They had a stale old catch-question to put to him—a wonderful story of a woman who was married in turn to each one of seven brothers who all died in succession. "In the resurrection," they asked, "whose wife of the seven shall she be?—for she was wife to them all." Jesus wasted little time on this folly. "In the resurrection," he answered, "they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels in heaven." So the Sadducees also were put to silence.

Now there was an honest scribe who had been listening to all these arguments, and who felt that Jesus had answered his opponents well. He also had his question to put, not to entrap the Saviour, but for his own satisfaction. "Master," he said, "which is the great commandment in the law?" "The great commandment," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength!' This is the first of the Commandments. And the second is like it: 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thy self.' There is no commandment greater than these."

The scribe was full of wonder at Christ's wisdom. "Master," he cried, "indeed thou hast said the truth: for there is one God, and no other beside him; and to love him with all the strength, and to love one's neighbour as oneself is more than all burnt-offering and sacrifices." Jesus could admire an honest man too. "Thou art not far," he said, "from the Kingdom of God." And after that his questioners were silent.

Jesus sat down to rest for a while just opposite to the great bronze trumpet-mouths into which worshippers were wont to cast the offerings for the Temple. Men and women were coming and going, some of them wealthy, and casting in valuable gifts. Among them there came a poor widow, and as Jesus watched her she threw in the two tiniest coins that were in use, which together made a farthing. He called his disciples to him, and pointed to her retreating figure. "Truly I say to you," he said, "that this poor

widow hath cast in more than all the rest who have been giving to the treasury. They gave out of their abundance; but she, out of her poverty, has given all that she had."

(5) THE COMING OF THE GREEKS

AMONG the crowds who had gathered for the Passover from all parts of the land were certain Greeks who had become converts to the Jewish faith. They were fain to see Jesus; but they could not go beyond the barrier into the inner court of the Temple where he stood, for that was forbidden to all Gentiles, on pain of death. Philip, however, was standing in the outer court, and someone pointed him out to the Greeks as a follower of Jesus, who bore a Greek name, and might perhaps help them. They came to him and said, "Sir, we would see Jesus." Philip hesitated for a moment, and turned to Andrew to ask his advice; then the two together went and took the message to their Master.

When Jesus heard it, his face shone with a new light, and a great joy came into his heart. He saw in these Gentile strangers who sought him, the heralds of the great multitude of all nations and kindreds who should come to own him as their Saviour; and his heart was glad. "The hour is come," he answered, "that the Son of Man should be glorified. Truly I say to you, Except the seed-corn fall into the ground and die, it remains unfruitful; but if it die, it bears much fruit." And then there came over his heart the thought of all the suffering and shame that lay between him and the triumph which he foresaw; and he almost shrank from it, seeing it so near. "Now is my soul troubled," he cried, "and what shall I say? Shall I say, 'Father, save me from this hour?' But for this very reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify Thy name."

That moment there came the sound of a great voice that said, "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." The people heard it, and were amazed. "It was thunder," said some of them.

"Nay, an angel spake to him," said others. Jesus said to them, "This voice came, not for me, but for your sakes. Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."

He was speaking of the Cross that was drawing so near; but the bulk of the people who heard him could make nothing of what he said. Yet certain of the priests and rulers believed in him in secret; but in public they would not confess him, lest they should be disowned by their class, and excommunicated. For they loved the praise of man more than the praise of God.

(6) JESUS TELLS OF THE FUTURE

EVENING came, and Jesus and his disciples passed out of the Temple on their way back to Bethany. The great building was shining in the rays of the setting sun, a wondrous splendour of white marble and red gold. The disciples turned and looked back upon it with wonder and admiration. "Master," they said to him, "see the great stones, and the mighty building of it." His answer was sombre and sad. "Seest thou these great buildings? There shall not be left of them one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down." At that ominous word silence fell upon them, and they said no more as they crossed the valley and climbed the slope of Olivet.

On the top of the hill they sat down to rest, and to take another look at the glory of the sunset on the city. Four of the Twelve, Peter and James, John and Andrew, drew closer to their Master, and asked him, "Tell us, when shall these things be, and what shall be the sign by which we may know that they are at hand?" Then Jesus began to tell them of all the dark and terrible things that were going to happen in the future. He spoke of nation rising against nation, of war and famine, earthquake and pestilence. These things, he said, were but the beginning of sorrows. Trouble and persecution would come upon his followers, and they would

PETER'S DENIAL.
(John xviii. 26–27.)

be dragged before kings and rulers for his name's sake; but they were not to fret themselves, even though they were hated of all men, for by their patience they would win their souls.

And then he told them how the time would come when they would see the beautiful city which lay before them in the dying glow of the April sunset girdled with hostile armies, and would know that the end was near. "Truly," he said, "this generation shall not pass away till all these things be fulfilled." (Even so it came to pass, for in forty years the Roman armies were gathered around Jerusalem, and the Holy City passed away in a whirlwind of fire and a sea of blood.) "Watch ye, therefore," he said solemnly to the Twelve as they gathered around him, with awed faces, in the deepening darkness, "for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning; lest coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch!"

Then as they turned to go over the hill towards Bethany, he spoke to them another of his picture-stories to fix in their minds the need of watchfulness. This time the picture was of a wedding procession, when the bridegroom is brought home at night, with rejoicing, to the place where his bride awaits his coming. "Ten bridesmaids," he said, "were appointed to go forth to meet him and light his pathway with their lamps. Five of the ten were wise, and five were foolish. The foolish maidens took their lamps, but carried no store of oil to refill them when they burned low, but the wise maidens took vessels of oil with them. There was a weary time to wait ere the bridal train drew near; and while they waited, all the bridesmaidens, wise and foolish alike, fell fast asleep.

"At midnight a shout was heard. 'Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.' And at that word the maidens all arose and trimmed their lamps; but the lamps of the foolish ones were burning low, for the oil in them was nearly done. They came to their wiser sisters, who were busy refilling their lamps. 'Give us some of your oil,' they said, 'for our lamps are going out.' 'Nay,' answered the wise maidens, 'lest there be not enough for us and for you; but go ye rather to them that sell oil, and buy

for yourselves.' The foolish maidens hurried off to buy, but while they were gone the bridegroom's train arrived, and all who were ready went in along with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut. Hastening back from their errand, the late-comers knocked eagerly at the door, crying 'Lord, Lord, open to us.' But no one came to open; only the bridegroom's voice said solemnly, 'Of a truth I say unto you, I know you not.'" "Watch, therefore," said Jesus again, "for ye know neither the day nor the hour when the Son of Man cometh."

Another picture he set before them as they went homewards that night—a picture, this time, of the day when men shall stand before God's judgment-seat. "When the Son of Man shall come in his glory," he said, "he shall sit upon the throne, girt with the holy angels. Before him all nations shall be gathered; and some he shall place on his right hand, and some on his left, just as a shepherd separates the sheep of his flock from the goats. Then the King shall say to those on the right hand, 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, receive the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world: for I was hungry, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me.' But the righteous shall answer him, 'Lord, never did we aught of this unto thee.' And the King shall reply, 'Inasmuch as ye did it to one of the least of my brethren ye did it unto me.'

"Then shall he turn to those on the left hand, and pronounce their doom. 'Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was hungry, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.' And they shall answer, 'Lord, when saw we thee hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not serve thee?' But he shall say to them, 'Truly I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me!'

"So these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal."

(7) THE TRAITOR AND HIS WORK

IT may have been that very night when Jesus spoke of the need of watchfulness and prayer, and of the great judgment day, that Judas Iscariot sold his Master, and lost his own soul. Jesus had known for long the dark thoughts that were in his disciple's heart; and knew, too, where they would lead him in the end, perhaps, long before Judas was conscious of it himself. "Have not I chosen you, the Twelve?" he had said once. "And one of you is a devil."

It was after the rebuke that Jesus gave him over the matter of Mary's gift of the ointment that Judas began to plan his treachery. Perhaps the reproof rankled in his heart; perhaps he saw that there were to be no crowns or thrones for the Saviour's followers, and thought that at least he would make something out of his knowledge of Jesus before it was too late. He knew that the priests hated his Master, so that they would do almost anything to work their wicked will upon him, and he made up his mind that he would sell Jesus to these cruel enemies.

The priests were plotting in secret how they might best lay hands on Jesus, and put him to death. "Not on the feast-day," they said, "lest there be an uproar of the common folk against us." While they plotted, Judas, who had slunk away from the Master's side, came to them and offered himself as their tool. "What will ye give me," he said, "and I will deliver him unto you?"

The priests were eager for the slaying of Jesus, and overjoyed at the chance that had given them one of his followers as their guide; but they were thrifty men, too, and they bought Judas cheap. Thirty pieces of silver they offered to him, which would be something less than five pounds of our money; and for that miserable reward, the price of the commonest slave, Judas sold himself to do the darkest deed that the world has ever known. Then the traitor went back, and took his place, as he was wont, among the rest,

and none, save his Master and himself, knew that he was watching his chance to earn the blood-money for which he had thrown away his honour and his soul.

(8) THE UPPER ROOM

NOW came the day when the Passover Lamb must be killed, and all Jerusalem was busy with the preparation of the feast. Jesus sent two of his disciples, Peter and John, to make things ready for his last Passover. "Go into the city," he said to them, "and there shall meet you a man bearing a water-jar" (a sign that was not to be mistaken, for water-carrying was almost invariably woman's work). "Follow him into the house where he goeth, and say to the head of the house, 'The Master saith, "Where is the guest chamber, where I shall eat the Passover with my disciples?"' He shall show you a large upper room furnished; there make ready."

So Peter and John went into the city, and found everything as Jesus had said, and they made all ready for the feast. At even-tide he left Bethany with the Twelve, and they came into the city. In the upper room all was in order for their coming, the table spread, the couches, where they should recline at supper, around it, the ewer and basin standing near the door to wash the dust of the road from their feet. Soon all had taken their places, but there were sullen, angry faces in the little group, for on their way they had been disputing as to who should be greatest in their Master's kingdom when it came. One thing they had all ignored—the need of washing their feet; for none would lower himself to take the ewer and basin and do for the rest a humble piece of work like that.

Jesus looked round upon the stubborn, foolish men who were yet so dear to him. He said not a word, but rose up from his couch, laid aside his cloak, tied the towel round his waist, and filled the basin with water. Then he stooped beside the nearest of his disciples, and in a moment the hearts of all were filled with shame,

as they saw their Master washing their feet. No one spoke, until he came to Simon Peter; but as Jesus bent over him, Peter could bear it no longer. "Lord," he broke out, "dost thou wash my feet?" "What I do thou knowest not now," said Jesus, "but thou shalt know afterwards." "Thou shalt never wash my feet," cried Peter. "If I wash thee not," Jesus answered, "thou hast no part with me." Peter rushed to the other extreme when he heard that. "Lord, not my feet only, but my hands and my head as well." "He that is bathed," said Jesus, "hath no need save to wash his feet, but is altogether clean; and ye are clean—but not all." For he saw Judas sitting there with the rest, and knew what was in his black heart.

The presence of the traitor was like a load on the Saviour's spirit, and he could bear it no longer. His heart was very heavy at the thought of such baseness, and at last as they reclined at table he said plainly, "One of you shall betray me." Amazed and distressed, the disciples looked at one another, wondering and doubting, and first one and then another and another said, "Master, is it I?" John was reclining nearest to Jesus on his right hand, so close that his head was almost on Jesus' breast; and Peter signed to him to ask the Master the traitor's name. When John asked, "Lord, who is it?" Jesus said, "It is he to whom I shall give the bread when I have dipped it in the dish." So saying, he dipped the bread in the dish, and passed it to Judas Iscariot, who sat on his other side, and said to him, "What thou doest, do quickly."

The rest of the Twelve had no time to realise what the words or the action meant, or Judas would never have left the room alive. They thought that Jesus was only bidding him buy something that was needed for the Passover, or give something to the poor. But Judas knew. All hell was in his heart that night, and when he had taken the bread he rose and went out, and it was night.

The departure of the traitor lifted a dark cloud from the spirit of Jesus. Now he could talk freely to the faithful men who were left, and show them his mind. As they reclined around the table, he took bread, and gave thanks to God, and brake it, and handed it to his disciples, saying, "Take, eat; this is my body, which is

broken for you; this do in remembrance of me." When they had all eaten of the bread, he took a cup of wine, and passed it to them, saying, "This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you. Verily I say unto you I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God." So simply was set up the great memorial feast which Christ's church has kept ever since in remembrance of her Lord.

Then the Master opened all his heart to the followers whom he was to leave so soon, and the world has nothing more sacred or more precious than the record of those last words in the upper room. Jesus had a thought for everyone. Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the uttermost, and all his care was to warn and strengthen and comfort his friends against all the storm of trial which was to burst upon them. "Simon, Simon," he said to the disciple who had been so much to him, and who yet, for all his strength and courage, was so weak, "Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not; and, when once thou hast turned again, strengthen thy brethren." Simon could not understand. "Lord," he said, "I am ready to go with thee, both into prison and to death." Jesus answered sadly, "I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day before that thou shall thrice deny that thou knowest me."

Then he bade them be of good cheer, for that he was only going on before them to prepare a place for them in the Father's House of many mansions. "Whither I go ye know," he said, "and the way ye know." But Thomas was puzzled. "Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?" "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life," answered Jesus. "No man cometh unto the Father but by me." "Lord," said Philip, "shew us the Father, and it is enough." "Have I been so long with you," Jesus replied, "and yet hast thou not known *me*, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, 'Shew us the Father?'"

It seemed, indeed, as though he could not enough express his love to them and his longing for their welfare. Once and again he bade them abide in his love, called them his friends, and pledged

himself to help them in their hours of need by sending his own spirit of truth into their hearts to guide and teach and strengthen them.

Then at last they sang together their Passover Hymn, that great psalm whose refrain is,

> *"O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good,*
> *For His mercy endureth for ever."*

and when the last echoes had died away on the night air, they rose to go forth from that holy place. And as they stood ready, Jesus poured out his whole soul in one last prayer to his Father for the men whom he loved so dearly and was so soon to part from. "Holy Father," he said, "keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given me. . . . While I was in the world, I kept them in Thy name . . . and now come I to Thee . . . and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil. Sanctify them through Thy truth; Thy word is truth. Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory which Thou hast given me; for Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world."

(9) A PLACE CALLED GETHSEMANE

HE Saviour and the eleven went out through the silent streets of the sleeping city, in the moonlit April night. They went down the hill into the valley, crossed the little brook Kedron, and came to a place called Gethsemane, where was an olive garden with its gnarled and twisted trees, and its oil press. There they stopped, and Jesus bade them sit down for a while, that he might go apart and pray. So he took with him Peter and James and John, and turned aside from the rest into the dark shadows of the trees. A darker shadow lay upon his own heart, and he began to be sorrowful and sore distressed.

"My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death," he said. "Bide ye here, and watch with me."

So saying, he went a stone's throw from them, and fell on his face and prayed. "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me! Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt." His prayer over, he came back to the three watchers, and lo! they were fast asleep. "What," he said unto Peter, "could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

Once more he left them, and prayed a second time. "O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me except I drink it, Thy will be done." Returning, he found them sleeping again; for their eyes were weighed down with weariness. He left them and went back to his prayer yet again. And, as he prayed, great agony came upon his spirit, so that his sweat was like great drops of blood falling to the ground; and behold, an angel was sent from heaven to strengthen him. He came back the third time, and as he looked on the three weary men, he said, "Sleep on, now, and take your rest; behold the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners."

There came a flash of torches and lanterns through the shadows of the olive-trees, and the stillness was broken by the tramp of armed men and the hum of many voices. It was the traitor, with the High Priest's guard and servants seeking his victim. "Rise," said Jesus to the three, "let us be going; behold, he is at hand that doth betray me." Even as he spoke, the place was filled with tumult, and a great crowd of armed men surrounded the Lord and his helpless followers. Out of the crowd one dark figure stepped forward, and gave Jesus greeting. "Hail, Master!" he cried, and kissed him—the shamefullest and most shameless kiss that falsehood ever gave. For Judas had given it as a sign to his accomplices—"Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he; hold him fast." Jesus looked upon the traitor. "Friend," he said quietly, "wherefore art thou come? Dost thou betray the Son of Man with a kiss?"

He stepped forward and faced the crowd. "Whom seek ye?" he asked. "Jesus of Nazareth," came the answer from a score of

voices. "I am he." At that word a chill and an awe fell upon every spirit, and as though an unseen arm had smitten them, they recoiled from the serene figure that stood before them, cowering in fear, and falling the one over the other in their amaze. Again he asked them, "Whom seek ye?" And when they plucked up courage to name him once more, he answered them, "I have told you already that I am he; if therefore, ye seek me, let these go their way," and he waved a hand to where his disciples stood, bewildered and trembling.

Gaining courage when they saw that the great prophet did not blast them with fire from heaven, they laid hands on him, but at that sight, Peter's courage flashed up, or perhaps sheer terror drove him into action. "Lord," he cried, "shall we smite with the sword?" And before Jesus could answer, his sword was out, and with a feeble, ill-aimed stroke he had cut off the ear of a servant of the High Priest, named Malchus. Jesus turned upon his hasty servant. "Sheathe thy sword," he cried, "for all they that take the sword shall perish by the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot even now pray to my Father, and at once He shall give me twelve legions of angels? But how, then, shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?"

He turned to his captors, and held out his bound hands. "Let me do this one thing," he said. They understood and loosed the cords from his wrists. Then he stretched out his hand, touched the wounded man, and healed him. Those merciful hands were bound once more, the guard closed round their captive, and Jesus was led away to where the priests, triumphant now, were waiting to glut their spite and hatred.

(10) GOD'S PRIESTS AND GOD'S SON

IT was to the palace of the High Priest that Jesus was hurried by his captors. His disciples, completely overwhelmed by the sudden blow that had fallen upon them, had forsaken him and fled to save themselves; but Peter and John followed afar off, to see what should befall their Master. All was bustle and tumult in the High Priest's house, even though it was the dead of night. A great fire burned in the centre of the courtyard, for the April night was chilly, and the High Priest's servants, and the soldiers of the guard that had taken the Saviour, came and went, sitting awhile in the glare of the fire to warm themselves, and then turning away as duty or curiosity led them. Peter was stopped by the portress at the door; but John had acquaintances in the High Priest's household who passed him in, and after a little while he got permission for Peter to enter also. As he passed her, the portress looked at the sturdy figure of the Galilean fisherman. "Art not thou also one of this man's disciples?" she said. The sudden question was too much for Peter's courage and loyalty. "I know not, neither understand I what thou sayest," he replied. And as he turned aside into the shadow of the porch to hide his confusion, the clear morning air brought to his ear the faint distant note of the first cock-crow. It was a warning, but not enough.

Meanwhile in the hall of the palace Jesus stood before Caiaphas the High Priest, Annas, his father-in-law, and a host of priests and Temple servants. Old Annas, who had held the High Priest's office himself, led the examination at the first, and tried to make the Saviour commit himself as to his teaching. "I ever spoke openly to the world," Jesus answered. "I taught, not in secret, but in the synagogues and in the Temple, where all men could hear me. Why do you question me? Question the men who heard me—they know what I said." Thereat one of the captains of the Temple guard struck him over the face with his open hand, crying,

"Answerest thou the High Priest in such a fashion?" Then Annas yielded his place as questioner to his son-in-law Caiaphas, and the High Priest, making a show of justice to cover a thing that was neither just nor lawful, began to call witnesses as to what Jesus had taught.

Out in the courtyard Peter stood waiting. The shock of his first fear began to wear away as the minutes passed; and at last he plucked up courage to draw near to the fire and warm himself, and to join in the conversation. His rough northern speech told its own tale, and one of the maidservants loitering by the fire challenged him again. "Indeed thou art one of them," she said, "for thou art a Galilean, as any one can tell by your speech." All that was worst in Peter came to the surface at this new danger, and with a volley of fisherman's oaths, he cried, "I know not this man of whom ye speak."

But he was not clear of his tormentors yet. The weary minutes dragged on, as the witnesses in the High Priest's hall tried to entangle Jesus in their net of falsehood; and for another hour Peter waited and watched and listened, catching a glimpse now and then of his Master through the open door, or the sound of his voice for a moment. Then the third blow fell. A new figure strolled up to the fireside, and by an evil chance he was a friend of that very Malchus whose ear Peter had cut off. At once he challenged the Apostle. "Did not I see thee in the garden with him?" A third time Peter denied his Lord. And in that moment, while the false words were yet on his lips, there came clearer and louder, the second crowing of the cock; and as it fell upon his startled ear, the coward knew that his Master had heard, and was aware of his servant's baseness. Jesus turned from where he stood before Caiaphas, and gave one glance across the darkness to the man who had failed him. That glance broke Peter's heart. It all came over him with a rush of memory and remorse, his boast of faithfulness, his Master's warning, and now this look of mute reproach; "and Peter went out, and wept bitterly."

Within the judgment hall the mockery of justice went on. Witness after witness testified against Jesus, but not even the priests could make aught of their testimony; for no two of them

told the same story. Nothing was established against him save this, that he had once said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." In sheer exasperation at their failure Caiaphas started from his seat. "Answerest thou nothing?" he cried, "what is it which these witness against thee?" But Jesus held his peace. Then Caiaphas touched the heart of the long conflict. "I charge thee by the living God," he said solemnly, "that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God." Then a great silence fell upon the company, and all men listened awe-struck for the answer. It came clear and firm—"I am; and ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven."

In a moment all was a storm of rage and execration. Caiaphas rent his robes, and shouted to the cursing, raving crowd, "What need we any further witnesses? Ye have heard the blasphemy. What think ye?" And an answering roar went up—"He is a Son of death." Therewith all the vile passion of hatred and malice was let loose. Men pressed forward to where the Saviour stood, that they might spit upon him, or strike him on the face. Some blinded his eyes, and showered blows on him, crying—"Prophet, prophesy now who smote thee." So with mockery and derision, God's priests received and judged God's Son.

(11) HOW PONTIUS PILATE WAS TRIED

THE priests had condemned Jesus to death; but to slay him was beyond their power, for the Romans had taken from them the power of life and death. Therefore, before they could sate their malice to the uttermost, they must needs gain the ear of the Roman governor, and have his assent to their doom. Now the governor was Pontius Pilate—a fierce man and a cruel, who scorned these bitter Jews over whom he ruled, and had done many cruel deeds in his government of them, and was hated by them with heart and soul. To his palace, therefore, they

led Jesus, as soon as day broke. They themselves might not enter into the great hall of the Prætorium, for it was the time of the Passover Feast, and they feared defilement; but they sent word to the governor that they craved his presence and his judgment.

Pilate therefore came forward to give them audience, and asked them, "What charge bring ye against this man?" "If he were not an evil-doer," they answered with sullen insolence, "we would not have brought him to thee." But Pilate could be insolent as well as they. "Take ye him, and judge him according to your own law," said he, well knowing that this was what they dared not do. They had to veil their pride, and confess, "It is not lawful for us to put any man to death." Then they began to recite the charges against their captive. "We found this fellow leading the nation astray, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, saying that he himself is Christ, a King." Hearing that the Emperor's rights were concerned, Pilate realised unwillingly that he must needs deal with the matter. So he got him into his judgment hall, and bade his guards bring Jesus into his presence, while the priests and the mob waited and raved without.

"Art thou the King of the Jews?" said Pilate. Jesus answered him, "Dost thou ask this of thyself, or have others taught thee?" "Am I a Jew?" cried the governor scornfully. "Thine own nation and the chief priests have given thee up to me. What hast thou done?"

"My kingdom," said Jesus, "is not of this world; if it were, my servants would fight, that I should not be given up to the Jews; but my kingdom is not here." Pilate recked little of a kingdom not of this world. Carelessly he asked again—"Art thou a King then?" "Thou sayest that I am—a King!" answered Jesus. "For this cause was I born into the world, that I might witness to the truth; and everyone that is of the truth heareth my voice."

"Truth, truth!" said Pilate impatiently. "What is Truth?" Plainly this was a harmless dreamer—no rebel against the Emperor, but a man of visions and fancies. A shame to slay him, fool though he might be. So the governor came forth again to the priestly wolves who waited for their prey. "I find in him no fault at all," he said contemptuously.

The words only added fuel to the fire of their hatred. More fiercely still they pressed their charge. "He stirreth up all the Jewish nation, from Galilee to this place." "Galilee," said Pilate, "is he a Galilean, then?" And when he had learned that it was so, "Take him to Herod," he said, "and let him be judged," hoping that thus he had rid himself of a troublesome cause. So the mob and the guard with their prisoner trooped off to Herod's palace, to lay the matter before John's murderer.

When Herod understood that they had brought Jesus to him for judgment, he was glad. For long he had wished to see the prophet of Nazareth, whose mighty works had once made him tremble; and now he hoped that Jesus would work some miracle in his presence. But to all his questions the Lord returned no answer. The priests were instant and fierce in their accusations; but Jesus stood silent, with close-shut lips. He would waste no words on such a creature as Herod. Disappointed and exasperated, the King and his led captains made a mock of the man whose silence shewed his scorn of them. Scoffing and jeering, they cast a gaudy mantle round his shoulders in derision of his kingship, and sent him back to Pilate. The Roman governor's action had at least served one purpose. There was an old feud between Pilate and the Edomite king; but Pilate's compliment to Herod's jurisdiction soldered it up, and the twain were friends again from that day forward.

Returning to the Prætorium, the priests found the governor less willing than ever to do their will. For in the meantime his wife had sent a messenger to him, saying, "Have thou nothing to do with this just person; for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him." Pilate's whole heart was against the very thought of giving up this innocent man to his accusers; yet he dared not break with the priests utterly. He caught at an expedient which seemed to promise a way of escape. "Neither I nor Herod can find anything worthy of death in this man," he said. "But ye have a custom that I should release a prisoner to you every Passover. Shall I release this King of the Jews?" There was a moment's hesitation; but the priests went swiftly through the crowd putting words into their mouths; and a mur-

mur rose and swelled, till the whole mob was shouting, "Not this man, but Barabbas!" Now Barabbas was a man of violence and blood, who for rebellion and murder had been cast into prison.

Yet one more effort the governor made to escape from the toils. "Then I will scourge Jesus, and release him," he said. His lictors bound Jesus, and scourged him. Some of the soldiers in mockery wove a crown of thorn twigs, and pressed it cruelly down upon his head, while others cast an old military cloak of scarlet about his bleeding shoulders, thrust a reed into his hands for a mock sceptre, then snatched it from him and smote him over the head with it, spitting upon him and jeering at his helplessness. When they were weary of their cruel sport, Pilate led their victim forth again, with his mock honours upon him. "Behold the Man!" he cried.

Perhaps he hoped that so pitiful a sight would move them to mercy; but he did not know those hearts of stone. At once there came a shout from the chief priests, "Crucify, crucify!" Pilate turned away in angry scorn. "Take ye him and crucify him yourselves," he said, "for I find no fault in him." But the priests were set upon making the governor serve their ends. "By our law," they said, "he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God." At that charge, Pilate's superstitious fears awoke. He drew Jesus into the hall again, and began to question him anew. "Whence art thou?" But Jesus was silent. "Speakest thou not unto me?" cried the governor angrily. "Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, or to release thee?" "Thou couldest have no power at all against me," said Jesus solemnly, "unless it were given thee from above." That answer made Pilate the more eager to release this strange prisoner; but the priests raved against him with charges of disloyalty to the Emperor. "If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend; whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Cæsar."

That was the end. Pilate dared not risk such an accusation. He came forth with his prisoner, and sat him down in his seat of judgment in the courtyard paved with mosaic, which the Jews call "Gabbatha." "Behold your King," he said in bitter scorn of himself and them. "Away with him," they howled, "Crucify him!"

"Shall I crucify your King?" taunted the helpless judge. The chief priests answered, "We have no King but Cæsar."

One last protest Pilate made—in vain. He bade his servants bring water, and there before them all, he washed his hands, saying, "I am guiltless of the blood of this just person; see ye to it." From the raving mob beneath there came a fierce answering shout, "His blood be on us, and on our children."

Pilate turned and gave sentence. His guard released Barabbas, the robber and murderer; they laid hands on Jesus, and led him away to death.

Then, too late, the traitor Judas realised what he had done. In utter misery he brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests, crying bitterly, "I have sinned, in that I have betrayed the innocent blood." They looked upon his agony with cold contempt. "What is that to us?" they said. "Look thou to that." The silver pieces burned his hands. He cast them down in the Temple, and went forth despairing, and hanged himself. The chief priests gathered up the money. "We may not put it into the treasury," they said, "for it is the price of blood." Therefore they bought therewith a field beyond the city walls to bury strangers in; and from that day that field which had been called the Potter's Field, was named Aceldama, that is to say, "The Field of Blood."

(12) THE DEATH THAT BROUGHT LIFE

NO time was lost in carrying out Pilate's reluctant sentence. The scarlet cloak was stripped from the shoulders of Jesus, and his own garments flung about him in its place. The two heavy beams of the cross were laid upon him, and the Roman guard led him forth through the crowded streets along the Sorrowful Way, to the place of execution. With him were led two evil-doers who were doomed to die, that so his shame might be the greater. Jesus was worn and weak with the long agony of that mockery that he had endured, and ere long the

"ART THOU A KING THEN?"
(John. xviii. 37.)

centurion who commanded the guard saw that the weight of the cross was more than he could bear. It chanced that at that moment there passed by a stranger, a Jew from African Cyrene, Simon by name, who had come to Jerusalem for the Passover Feast. On him the guard laid hands, and laid the beams of the cross upon his shoulders, and, so burdened, he followed Jesus, wondering and pitying.

Some there were, in the crowd, who watched that fateful journey, whose hearts were sore for the innocent sufferer. There were women who had listened to the Saviour's words, and seen his deeds of mercy, and who could not turn from him in his hour of sorrow. They followed him, weeping, and bewailing his fate. But Jesus had no sorrow for himself. He thought of the coming days when swift destruction should fall upon the city that would have none of him, and when the innocent should suffer with the guilty. "Daughters of Jerusalem," he said, turning to them, "weep not for me, but weep for Jerusalem, and for your children."

At last they came to the place of doom. It was a little hill beyond the city walls, shaped like a human head, so that men called it "Golgotha—The Place of a Skull." There they offered to Jesus the draught of wine mixed with myrrh which merciful folk provided for those who were to die by crucifixion, that their senses might be dulled to the long agony; but when he had tasted it, he would not drink. Then they laid the Lord down upon the cross, and drove the cruel nails through his hands and feet, and set the tree of shame high with its innocent burden, between the crosses of the two evil-doers. And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

Beneath the cross the soldiers wrangled over their shameful perquisite—the garments of those whom they were crucifying. They divided the raiment of Jesus into four parts, a part for each soldier, and cast lots for their possession. So was fulfilled the Scripture which says, "They parted my raiment among them, and on my vesture they did cast lots." Then they sat down, and watched him. Over his head was fixed a tablet, bearing an inscription which Pilate had caused to be written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, so that all might see wherefore this man was dying; and

the writing was "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." When the priests saw what was written, they were much displeased. They hurried back to the governor's palace and sought audience of him. "Why hast thou written, 'The King of the Jews?'" they said, "Write rather that he said, 'I am the King of the Jews.'" But Pilate was glad to take this petty vengeance on the men who had driven him to an act that his soul loathed. "What I have written, I have written," he answered curtly, and the writing stood.

Around the cross stood a hateful crowd of the bitterest enemies of Jesus, the Scribes and priests. To them his sufferings were the gladdest sight that they could see, and after their base kind they strove to add to his agony by mockery and derision. "He saved others," they said, "himself he cannot save. If he be the Christ, let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe him." So they gibed and jeered, nodding their heads at him in evil glee. One of the evil-doers even, who hung by his side, railed upon him, also. "If thou be the Christ," he cried, "save thyself and us." But his companion rebuked him. "Dost thou not fear God," he said, "seeing thou art in the same condemnation? We indeed suffer justly; for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man hath done no wrong." Then he turned his head to Jesus. "Lord," he prayed, "remember me, when thou comest in thy kingdom." And the dying Saviour answered, "Verily I say unto thee, today shalt thou be with me in Paradise."

Not all the crowd that gathered beneath the cross were enemies. Far off, on the fringe of the multitude, were many of the women who had followed him from Galilee; and close by the tree of shame there stood a little group of those who were dearest to him, Mary his mother, and her sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala; and with them was John, the disciple whom Jesus loved. Even in his agony, Jesus thought of her whose heart the sword was now piercing, and of her need in the days to come. "Woman," he said, "behold thy son," and to John, "Behold thy mother;" and from that hour John took Mary to his own home.

So the long hours passed, and at last the end was drawing near. Great clouds crept up over the sky, the sun in the high heavens was darkened, and a dense blackness hung over all the city for

three hours. Out of the darkness there came a cry from the labouring heart of the great sufferer, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" And then a moment later another cry of bodily anguish—"I thirst!" At that one of the soldiers, more merciful than the rest, dipped a sponge in sour wine, put it on a reed, and raised it to his lips. But the others who had heard the first cry, checked him. "He is calling for Elijah," they said, "let alone, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him."

Then the darkness passed away from the soul of the dying Saviour, and he spake again, the greatest words that ever were uttered by a son of man—"It is finished." And then he bowed his head, and saying, "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit!" he died. So was fulfilled that which the Baptist had spoken, when he looked on Jesus and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, which beareth away the sin of the world."

Now as the evening drew on came the priests to Pilate with a mighty scruple. With the sunset, the Passover Sabbath would begin, and it was not meet that the Sabbath should be polluted by the spectacle of dead bodies hanging on the cross. They recked nothing of slaying the innocent, but they could not endure that the Sabbath should be broken. Therefore they besought Pilate that the legs of those that were crucified might be broken, to hasten their death, and that their bodies might be taken away. So the soldiers brake the legs of the twain that were crucified with Jesus; but when they came to the cross in the midst, they saw that Jesus was dead already. Yet, to make all sure, one of the soldiers raised his spear and pierced the Saviour's side; and there flowed out blood and water. So were fulfilled the Scriptures: "A bone of him shall not be broken," and "They shall look on him whom they pierced."

In that hour when Jesus gave back his spirit unto God, there was a great earthquake, that brake the rocks, and rolled away the stones from the graves, and rent in twain the veil of the Temple from the top to the bottom. And when the earth shook and trembled at the passing of its Saviour, the centurion who had watched the cross of Jesus all that day was moved with awe and

wonder. Already he had felt in his heart that this was no common man—"Truly," he had said, "this was a righteous man." Now he said more, "Truly this was a Son of the Gods."

At even there came to Pilate a man of wealth and position named Joseph of Arimathæa. For long he had been a disciple of Jesus, but fear had kept him from confessing it openly. Now he begged the governor to grant him leave to take away the body of the Saviour, and Pilate gave him his wish. With him came Nicodemus, who had once come to Jesus by night, and he brought with him myrrh and aloes wherewith to anoint the body of the Lord, that it might be buried with due honour. Together they twain wrapped the body in linen with the spices, and they bore it to a new tomb that Joseph had caused to be hewn in the rock in a garden hard by the place where the cross was set. There they laid Jesus to rest; and Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James followed them, and marked the place where the Lord lay.

Next day the priests and Pharisees came once more to Pilate. Their foe was dead; but they were still shaken by vague fears. "Sir," they said, "we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, 'After three days I will rise again.' Command therefore that the tomb be guarded till the third day is over, lest his disciples take him away and pretend that he has risen, so that the last error may be worse than the first." "Ye have a guard of your own," said the governor shortly, "go your way, and make things secure yourselves." So they set the High Priest's seal on the great stone that was rolled against the mouth of the tomb, and set a guard of soldiers to keep watch till the third day should pass.

That Sabbath day was a great day in Jerusalem. Round every table in the crowded city men and women and children gathered, and the Paschal Lamb was eaten with bitter herbs, and the wine cup blessed and passed from one to another, in memory of the Great Deliverance. And none of those who kept the feast knew that God had wrought for the world a Deliverance greater than that for which they gave thanks, or that Christ, their Passover, had been sacrificed for them.

REMORSE.
(Matthew, xxvii, 5.)

(13) THE FIRST EASTER-TIDE

ERY early on the morning after the Passover Sabbath came some of the women who had loved and followed Jesus unto his tomb, while it was yet dark, bearing with them spices to anoint the dead body of their Master. There were Mary Magdalene, and Mary, the mother of Jesus, and Salome, and Joanna, and as they came they said among themselves—"Who shall roll away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?" The sunrise was just brightening the east as they came to the garden; and in that moment there was a great earthquake, and the dazzling figure of an angel from heaven appeared, and at his touch the great stone rolled back from the mouth of the tomb. When the guards saw him, their hearts stood still, and they fell on their faces like dead men. But the angel turned to the astonished women. "Fear not," he said to them; "for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here; for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay." Then he bade them return to the eleven and tell them of the rising of their Lord; and with fear and great joy in their hearts, the women hastened back to the city with their wondrous tidings.

When they were gone, the men of the guard also hastened back to their masters, and told their story. But the priests had gone too far to draw back. Dismayed as they were, they felt that at all hazards the truth must not get abroad. They gave great bribes to the soldiers, bidding them say that the disciples had come by night and stolen away the body of Jesus, while the guards slept. "And if this come to the governor's ears," they said, "we will persuade him, and keep you safe."

Meanwhile Mary Magdalene had found Peter and John, and told them her story. She had but partly understood the angel's message, for all that she said was, "They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him." The two went forth, and hastened towards the tomb.

As they ran, John, younger and swifter, shot ahead of Peter, and came first to the tomb. Stooping down and looking in, he saw the grave-clothes lying; but while he hesitated to go in, Peter came up, and boldly entered the sepulchre. There was the linen in which Joseph and Nicodemus had wrapped their dead Master, and the head-cloth, folded together, and lying by itself, apart from the rest. Then came John also into the tomb, and he saw and believed. Lost in wonder, the two disciples returned home; but Mary Magdalene who had followed them as close as she might, remained outside of the door of the empty tomb, weeping. As she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the tomb. There were two white-robed angels sitting, one at the head, the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. "Woman," they said to her, "why weepest thou?" "Because they have taken away my Lord," said Mary, "and I know not where they have laid him."

At that very moment she was aware of a presence behind her. She turned swiftly, and there stood Jesus; but in the grey dawn, and half blinded by her tears, she did not know him. "Woman," he said to her, "why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou?" Supposing him to be Joseph's gardener, she answered, "Sir, if thou hast borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away." Jesus said but one word, "Mary!" At that sound, she knew all. "My Master," she cried, and fell at his feet, clasping his knees. "Touch me not," Jesus said, "for I am not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brethren, and say to them, 'I ascend to my Father, and your Father; and to my God and your God.'" But when Mary returned to add her story to what the other women and Peter and John had to tell, the disciples were still slow to believe. "Idle tales," they said, and would not hearken to her.

That same afternoon two of Christ's followers set out from Jerusalem to walk to a village called Emmaus, between seven and eight miles from the city; and, as they journeyed, they talked of all that had happened these last three days. Another wayfarer drew up alongside them, and walked with them awhile. "What are ye talking about," he said to them, "as ye walk, and are sad?" One of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered, "Dost

thou dwell alone in Jerusalem, that thou knowest not what has happened there in these days?" Then they told him of the great prophet Jesus, to whom they looked for the redemption of Israel, and how the priests and rulers had condemned and slain him. "This is the third day," they said, "since these things were done; and some women of our company astonished us by telling us that when they went to his tomb, they found not his body, but saw a vision of angels, who told them that he was alive. Some of our friends, moreover, went to the tomb, and found it empty, as the women had said, but him they saw not.

"O foolish men," said their fellow traveller, "and slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken. Was it not right that Christ should suffer these things, and enter into his glory?" So saying, he began to teach them from the books of Moses and of the prophets the meaning of all that had been written concerning himself. Ere long they drew near to Emmaus, and Jesus appeared to be going on further; but they could not bear to be parted from their wonderful teacher, and pressed him to lodge with them. So he went in with them, and the three sat down at table to their evening meal. As they sat there, suddenly he took bread, and blessed it, and gave it to them. In a moment the familiar action revealed the Lord to them, and in that same moment, he was gone.

They could not rest at Emmaus. "Did not our hearts burn within us," they said, "while he talked with us by the way, and explained the Scriptures to us?" At once they set out for Jerusalem again; and there when they arrived, they found the eleven gathered together with other disciples, and telling a wondrous tale of how the Lord was indeed risen, for he had appeared unto Simon Peter. They added their story to the rest, and all was wonder and amaze.

In that very moment their Master came once more. Suddenly, none knew whence or how, he was among them, greeting them with the old familiar salutation, "Peace be unto you." And when they still trembled before him, deeming him a spirit, he said, "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have." So

saying, he shewed them his wounded hands and feet; and the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.

But it fell out that on that night, Thomas, who was called the Twin, was not with the rest when Jesus came. The other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord;" but Thomas would have none of it. "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe." A week passed and the disciples were together in their meeting place again, Thomas with them. The doors were shut, but Jesus stood suddenly among them, saying, "Peace be unto you." Then he turned to Thomas,—"Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side; and be not faithless, but believing." Thomas fell down and worshipped. "My Lord, and my God!" he cried. "Thomas," answered Jesus, "because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

(14) MORNING BY THE LAKE-SIDE

IT was early morning by the Sea of Galilee, and a little fishing craft was drawing in towards the shore in the grey misty dawning. In the boat were Simon Peter, Thomas the Twin, Nathanael of Cana, James and John the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples. They had come back to Galilee to meet with their Lord, as he had bidden them, and, weary of waiting, they had taken to their old trade again. Now they were coming ashore after a fruitless night's toil. On the beach a fire was burning red through the grey mist, and by the water's edge stood a dark figure, waiting.

As they drew within earshot the stranger hailed them. "Lads, have ye aught to eat?" "No," they shouted back. "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and ye shall find." They cast the net, and in a moment it was so full that they could not draw it. At once it all came back again to John—that other morning

when the net was cast, and Jesus said, "From henceforth ye shall catch men." He whispered to Peter, "It is the Lord." Simon waited for nothing more. Belting his fisher's coat about him, he plunged into the water, and swam the hundred yards to the shore, to cast himself at his Master's feet. Behind him, more slowly, came the boat, with the other disciples, dragging the heavy net.

Jesus led them to the fire on the beach, where there was fish and bread ready for their morning meal. "Bring some of the fish ye have just caught," he said. Peter ran down to the boat and drew the net to shore, with an hundred and fifty-three great fish tangled in its meshes. "Come and eat," said the Lord; and they all gathered around him silent and awe-stricken, while he blessed and brake the bread and the fish among them.

When they had broken their fast, Jesus turned to Peter. "Simon, son of Jonas," he said, "lovest thou me more than these?" "Yea, Lord," answered Peter, "thou knowest that I love thee." Jesus saith to him, "Feed my lambs." Once more he put the question, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" and wondering, Peter made the same answer. "Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee." "Feed my sheep," said Jesus.

A third time the question came—"Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" Now Peter began to understand, and his heart was sore—three denials, three questions! This time he changed his answer, "Lord," he said, "thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee." "Feed my sheep," Jesus said, and then—"Truly," he added, "when thou wast young, thou didst gird thy robe about thee and go thine own way; but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thine hands, and someone else shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldst not choose to go"—so foretelling to his servant the death that awaited him. So saying he bade Peter follow him. Peter turned and saw John also following. "Lord," he said, "and what shall this man do?" "If I will that he wait till I come," said Jesus, "what is that to thee? Follow thou me."

And from that saying, some of the disciples reasoned that John should not die until his Lord had come again. Yet Jesus said not so, but only, "If I will that he wait till I come, what is that to thee?"

(15) HOW JESUS WENT HOME

FOR forty days after his Resurrection Jesus dwelt among his disciples on earth. Once and again he met with them in Galilee. At one time five hundred of them were gathered on a hillside in the land where they had so often walked with him; and as they waited, he appeared among them, and gave them his commission—"All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth," he said. "Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; teaching them to observe all that I have bidden you; and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

But it was not in Galilee, but in the Holy City, where he died for us, that his last farewell was spoken. There he assembled his servants, and bade them wait in Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit, of whom he had spoken to them, should be given them. Even then their hearts still clung to the thought that he might now be going to confound his enemies by one great stroke. "Lord," they asked, "wilt thou at this time restore the Kingdom of Israel?" Jesus turned their thoughts to other things. "It is not for you to know the times and the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power," he said, "but ye shall receive power, after the Holy Spirit is come upon you; and ye shall be my witnesses to the end of the earth." They were standing on the slopes of Olivet as he said these words; and while he blessed them with hands outstretched he vanished from their midst, and a bright cloud received him so that they saw him no more.

They strained their eyes towards the heaven whither he had gone; but as they stood with uplifted faces, two men clad in white garments spoke to them, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."

So the sting was taken out of their loss; and they knew that Jesus had but gone, as he had promised, back to his Father's House to prepare a place for them, ere he came again to receive them unto himself.

Part V. *The Story of the Early Church—In Palestine*

(1) WAITING FOR ORDERS

NOW when the Lord was gone from them into heaven, the eleven apostles remained together in Jerusalem, waiting in constant prayer for the hour when the promise of Jesus should be fulfilled, and the Holy Spirit be given. And with them were wont to meet together in that sacred upper room the holy women who had ministered unto Jesus, and Mary, the Lord's mother, and his brethren. And on a certain day, when an hundred and twenty of them were assembled, Peter stood up, and counselled that the place of the traitor Apostle should be filled by one of Christ's disciples who had followed the Master from the day of John's baptism to the day of the Ascension. So they chose two of the disciples, Joseph, whom men called Joseph the Just, and Matthias; and after prayer to God that he would show which of these twain he had chosen, they cast lots; and, the lot falling upon Matthias, he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

At length came the fiftieth day after the rising of the Lord,—the day of Pentecost, which was also the day of harvest thanksgiving among the Jews, so that the city was filled with worshippers who had come up for the feast from all lands. The company of believers was gathered together, as was their wont, when of a sudden there came a great sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it swept through the house where they sat. Therewith there appeared flames of fire, as it were tongues, which rested upon each one of them; and at once God's Spirit came upon them, and they began to speak with divers tongues as the Spirit taught them.

Ere long the thing was noised abroad in the city, and a great crowd gathered together, filled with amazement at the wonder that had happened. "Behold," they said, "are not all these men who are speaking Galileans? How comes it then that each one of us can hear some one of them speaking in his own native tongue? Here are men from Parthia, from Media, from Elam, men of Mesopotamia and Judea, of Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, men from Egypt and Libyan Cyrene, wanderers from Rome, islanders from Crete, pilgrims from the Arabian desert,—and we can all hear them tell in our own speech the wonderful works of God. What can this mean?" But others mocked, and said, "These men are full of new wine."

Then Peter stood up with the rest of the Apostles, and cried: "Men of Judea, and dwellers in Jerusalem, hearken unto me. These men are not drunken, as ye suppose. This is that which was foretold by the prophet Joel.

'*In the latter days it shall come to pass,*
Upon all flesh will I pour out my Spirit;
Your sons and your daughters, they shall prophesy,
Your old men shall dream dreams, your young men see visions.'

Hearken, men of Israel. Jesus of Nazareth, a man owned of God before you by miracles and wonders which God wrought by him in your presence, as ye well know; him ye took, and with wicked hands crucified and slew (for God of his own purpose and foreknowledge allowed it); but God hath raised him up, loosing him from the pains of death; of whose resurrection we all are witnesses. And now he, being exalted at God's right hand, hath sent forth the Holy Spirit as ye do see and hear. Let all men of Israel know therefore assuredly that God hath made the same Jesus, whom ye crucified, both Lord and Christ." His words went through their hearts like a sword. "Brothers," they cried to the Apostles, "what shall we do?" Then Peter bade them repent of their great sin, and be baptised in the name of Jesus, that they,too, might receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. "For," he said, "the promise is to you and to your children." Long and earnestly he pled with them, bidding them save themselves from the doom

THE RESURRECTION MORNING.
(Mark, xvi, 1–4.)

that must come upon the evil generation that had slain the Lord.

So many hearkened to his word, and were baptised, and that day there were added to the number of the disciples about three thousand souls. And all who saw that which had come to pass, and the wonders which were wrought by the apostles, were filled with amazement. But they that believed lived in kindness and brotherly love with one another, having all their goods in common, worshipping daily in the Temple and keeping their Master's ordinance of the breaking of the bread with glad and loving unity of heart; so that all the people honoured them, and many believers were added to them day by day.

(2) AT THE BEAUTIFUL GATE

NOW at this time there was wrought a wonder which turned the eyes of all men upon the disciples of Jesus. For it fell out that as Peter and John went up, as they were wont, to prayer in the Temple, a beggar who lay in the porch at that gate of the Temple which is called the Beautiful Gate, asked alms of them. The man was a cripple from his birth, and was now over forty years old; and every day his friends carried him to the Beautiful Gate, and laid him there, that the passers-by might pity him. When Peter heard his request, he turned him about, and, looking intently upon the poor cripple, he said, "Look on me." The man looked, eagerly expecting a gift, but Peter said, "Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk."

So saying, he took the man by the hand and raised him; and forthwith strength came into the helpless feet and ankles, and the man was healed. He sprang to his feet and stood; then, as the Apostles passed onwards, he entered the Temple with them, walking and leaping for very joy as he walked, and giving praise to God. All who saw him were amazed, for every worshipper knew the man who had lain for so long at the Beautiful Gate, and when

they saw him clinging to Peter and John (for it seemed as though he could not bear to part from them), they all came together in a crowd unto the porch that men call Solomon's Porch.

Then Peter spoke to the multitude. "Ye men of Israel," he said, "why do ye wonder at this? Or why do ye look so intently upon us as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man walk? It is by no power of ours, but by faith in the name of Jesus Christ that he stands whole before you—that same Jesus whom ye slew, choosing a murderer in his stead. Yet, brethren, I believe that it was in ignorance that both ye and your rulers did this. Repent, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of blessing shall come from God. For indeed ye are the children of the covenant, to whom God first sent His Son to bless you, in turning you from your sins."

As he thus spoke, there came upon them the priests and Sadducees, with the captain of the Temple guard; and they laid hands on Peter and John and cast them into prison till the next day; for they were angry because the resurrection of Jesus was being preached to the people. Yet Peter's words were not spoken in vain; for on that day about five thousand men believed.

On the morrow, all the rulers were gathered together, with the High Priests, Annas and Caiaphas, and with John and Alexander, and others who were near of kin to the High Priest. They brought Peter and John out of ward and set them in the midst, saying, "By what power or by what name have ye done this thing?" Then the Holy Spirit came upon Peter, and he answered boldly, "Ye rulers of the people and elders of Israel, if ye question us this day of the good deed done to the lame man, and by what means he is made whole, know ye, and all this people, that he was healed by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, and whom God raised from the dead. The stone which you builders despised is become the headstone of the corner, nor is there salvation in any other."

The priests marvelled at the boldness of the two apostles, unlearned and ignorant men as they were; but the presence of the man who had been healed was something which they could not deny. Therefore they only threatened Peter and John, and for-

bade them to speak any more to the people in the name of Jesus. But Peter answered, "Judge ye whether it be right in God's sight to listen unto you rather than unto God. We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." So when the priests saw that they could make nothing of the two, they threatened them once more and let them go; for they dared not punish them, fearing the people. For all men were praising God because of this notable miracle that had been done. And the Apostles, returning to their own company, gave thanks to God for his deliverance of them, and were so much the more encouraged to speak the word of God with boldness.

(3) PROGRESS AND PERSECUTION

N these days the company of believers grew and increased mightily, and they were all filled with a spirit of love and unity. No one among them needed to feel the pinch of want; for those who had much shared their abundance with those who had little, and no man said, "This is mine," for they had all things in common. And all those who had houses or lands sold them, and brought the price, and laid it at the feet of the Apostles that it might be shared among their brethren. But even among these happy followers of Christ, there were some who were false at heart. There was a certain couple, whose names were Ananias and Sapphira. They also sold a piece of land; but they agreed to keep back part of the price of it; and the rest Ananias brought and laid before the Apostles, as though it had been the whole. Then Peter, looking sternly on the hypocrite, said, "Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to God's Holy Spirit, and to keep back part of the price of thy land? It was thine to give or to withhold, and no man bade thee give it. Why hast thou planned this falseness in thine heart? Not unto man hast thou lied, but unto God."

Thereat Ananias suddenly fell down and died; and all men who had heard and seen trembled at the judgment of God. The young

men arose, wrapped the dead man in a shroud, and carried him forth to the grave.

About three hours after, his wife Sapphira, not knowing what had befallen her husband, came into the company. Peter greeted her. "Tell me, did ye sell the land for so much?" "Yes," she said, "for so much." Then said Peter, "How is it that ye have agreed to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? Behold, they which buried thy husband stand at the door, and shall carry thee out." At that word she also fell down and died; and the young men, coming in, found her dead, and bore her to her grave beside her husband. And a great dread fell upon the church, and upon all who heard of these things.

Day by day the new faith grew. The meeting place of the believers was in Solomon's Porch, and great numbers joined themselves to them, while even those who were afraid to own themselves believers yet praised and honoured them. Great wonders also were done by the Apostles, so that men carried out the sick into the street upon their beds, so that, as Peter passed, his shadow might fall upon them; and many were healed. But the High Priest and all his friends of the party of the Sadducees were furious at this growth of the faith; and they laid hands on the Apostles, and put them in the common prison. Next morning they called the council together, and gave orders that the prisoners should be brought before them. Then came the guard and said, "Truly we found the prison shut with all safety, and the jailers standing to watch the doors; but when we had opened the prison, we found no man within." Thereat all stood in amaze, and gazed on one another, questioning what could be the end of such things. While they wondered, came a messenger from the Temple, saying, "Behold, the men whom ye put in prison are standing in the Temple and teaching the people." And so it was; for God's angel had opened the prison doors and set them free, bidding them go to the Temple and speak the Words of Life.

Then came the captain of the guard, with his soldiers, and brought the Apostles to the council, using no violence, lest the crowd should stone him. So the High Priest challenged them. "Did not we strictly command you, that ye should not teach in

PHILIP AND THE ETHIOPIAN.
(Acts. viii, 34.)

this name? Yet, now, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us." Thereat Peter answered, "We must obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers hath raised up Jesus whom ye slew and hanged upon a cross. Him hath God exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour; and we are his witnesses of all these things, we and the Holy Spirit whom God hath given to them who obey Him." When they heard that, they were hot with anger, and would fain have put them to death. But there stood up in the council a man of note and reputation among them, named Gamaliel, and bade them have a care how they dealt with these men. "For," said he, "others have sought to stir up the people, as these do, and have come to naught in the end. Therefore let them alone. If their counsel and their work be only of men, it, too, will come to naught. But if it be of God, then ye cannot overthrow it. Take heed lest perchance ye be found to fight against God."

His words seemed wise to the council; so they called the Apostles once more, and when they had scourged them, they forbade them again to speak in the name of Jesus, and so dismissed them. And they went forth, thanking God that they were deemed worthy to suffer this disgrace for Jesus' sake. And daily in the Temple and from house to house, they continued to teach and preach Jesus Christ. God's blessing went with their words; and even among the priests many were turned to the faith of Jesus.

(4) THE FIRST MARTYR

THE very growth of the Church brought its own difficulties; for among the believers were many Jews from Grecian lands, and they complained that the poor widows of their company were neglected in the distribution of goods. Therefore the Apostles set apart seven men who should attend to the needs of these Hellenist Jews, and of these seven Stephen and Philip came to be the chief. Stephen was a man of great faith and power, and to him it fell to be the first to seal with

his blood his witness to the Redeemer. For certain Jews of Cyrene and Alexandria and Asia Minor entered into argument with him, and when they saw that he was more than their match, they haled him before the council, and brought a false accusation against him, saying, "We have heard this man say that Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered to us."

"Are these things so?" said the High Priest. Then Stephen stood forth to answer, and to those in the council it seemed, as they looked upon him, that his face was like the face of an angel. Steadfastly and faithfully he told them the truth concerning their unbelief and hardness of heart in all ages. "As your fathers did," he cried, "so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? They have slain those which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have now been the betrayers and murderers." At that charge they rose in mad rage, and ground their teeth at him; but he, looking up to heaven, cried, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of God." It was enough. They thrust their fingers into their ears lest they should hear further blasphemy, and with one shout of rage they rushed upon him, and drove him out of the city, and crushed him to death under a hail of stones.

In their company was a young man of note named Saul of Tarsus, a pupil of Gamaliel; and he also gave his voice for the death of Stephen. And the witnesses, whose duty it was to cast the first stones, laid down their cloaks at the feet of Saul. As the stones hailed upon him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit;" then kneeling he cried with a loud voice, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

(5) A BAPTISM IN THE DESERT

TO Saul of Tarsus it seemed that Stephen's murder was a just judgment of God upon a blasphemer. He made himself the leader of those who fought against the church, dragging the believers, both men and women, from their homes, and casting them into prison. So the church in Jerusalem was scattered for a season, and those that were driven out wandered through the land, preaching the gospel wherever they went. Among them was Stephen's comrade, Philip, who went to Samaria and there preached Jesus. The whole town was moved by his preaching and by the wonders which he wrought; for many were healed by him of their diseases, both of body and mind, so that the city rejoiced.

Now in Samaria there was a certain man named Simon, a wizard and a deceiver, who had tricked the people into believing him to be the great power of God. But when Philip was come, Simon found that his occupation was gone, for all men followed Philip rather than him; and at last even he believed and was baptised, wondering to see the true miracles that were wrought by his teacher. So when the Apostles heard of what had come to pass in Samaria, they sent down Peter and John, who prayed for the converts that the Holy Spirit might be given to them; and it was so.

When Simon saw this new gift coming upon others by the laying on of the Apostles' hands, he came to Peter and John, and offered them money. "Give me also this power," he said, "that on whomsoever I lay my hands, they may receive the Holy Spirit." "Thy money perish with thee," cried Peter indignantly, "for this thought of thine that the gift of God can be bought. In this matter thou hast no share; for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent, therefore, and pray to God to forgive this thy wicked thought." "Pray ye yourselves to God for me," faltered Simon, "that none of these things come upon me." Then the Apostles

journeyed back again to Jerusalem, preaching the Gospel as they went, in the Samaritan villages.

After this there came an angel of the Lord to Philip, saying, "Rise and journey southwards to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza, through the desert." Philip obeyed; and as he went, he saw a chariot coming along the road, and in it sat a man reading a roll of parchment. The man was an Ethiopian, an officer of great authority at the court of Candace, Queen of the Ethiopians, and the master of her treasure-house. He had travelled from far-off Ethiopia, beyond the cataracts of the Nile, to worship at Jerusalem; and now as he fared homewards, he was reading the book of the prophet Isaiah. "Go and meet this chariot," said the Spirit to Philip. Philip ran to meet the reader, and greeted him. "Dost thou understand what thou readest?" he asked. "How can I?" said the Ethiopian, "unless someone will teach me?" So he prayed Philip to come up into the chariot beside him.

Now this was the passage that he was reading. "He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment; and who shall declare his generation?—for he was cut off out of the land of the living." "Tell me," said the Ethiopian, "of whom doth the prophet say this? Of himself, or of some other man?" Thereat Philip began to speak, and told him of Jesus, and how Isaiah's words were all fulfilled in him.

As they journeyed, talking together, their path crossed a brook, and the Ethiopian said, "See, here is water—doth aught hinder me from being baptised?" "If thou believest with all thine heart," answered Philip, "thou mayest." The chariot drew up, and they two went down into the water, and Philip baptised him. When they came up out of the water, Philip was suddenly caught away by the Spirit of God, so that his companion saw him no more; but he went on his way with a glad heart, having found a treasure so much greater than he had hoped. As for Philip, he found himself at Ashdod, the old Philistine city by the sea; and he fared northwards along the coast road, preaching the gospel in all the towns by the way, until he came to Cæsarea.

"WHO ART THOU, LORD?"
(Acts, ix. 5.)

(6) THE HEAVENLY VISION

THE slaying of Stephen but whetted the rage of Saul of Tarsus. His whole heart was set on rooting out the new faith, and he besought the High Priest to give him letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found there any, whether men or women, who followed the Way (for so men called the faith of Jesus), he might bring them in chains to Jerusalem. So he hastened northwards to the great city, travelling, in his eagerness, even through the great heats of noonday. At length the fair white city lay before him in the midst of its green groves, when suddenly there shone from heaven a light beyond the brightness of the mid-day sun. Saul fell to the earth as though he had been smitten, and as he lay in the dust he heard a voice, saying, "Saul, Saul, why dost thou persecute me?" "Who art thou, Lord?" he answered; and the voice replied, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest; it is hard for thee to kick against the goads." Amazed and affrighted, he asked, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" "Arise and go into the city," said the Lord, "and it shall be told thee what thou must do."

Meanwhile the men who had ridden in Saul's company stood dumb with wonder, hearing the awful voice, but seeing no man. Saul arose from the earth; but when he opened his eyes, they were sightless. His companions took him by the hand, and so, like a frightened child, the fierce persecutor was led into Damascus. There he dwelt in darkness for three days, and neither bread nor water passed his lips.

Now in that city there dwelt a certain disciple of Jesus, named Ananias. To him came the Lord in a vision, and said to him, "Rise up, and go into the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for Saul of Tarsus; for behold he prayeth, and in a vision he hath seen a man named Ananias coming and putting his hand upon him that he might receive his sight." But Ananias was sore afraid. "Lord," he said, "I have heard by many of this

man, how much evil he hath done to Thy saints at Jerusalem; and here he hath authority from the High Priest to bind all that call upon Thy name." "Yet go, as I bid thee," said the Lord, "for he is My chosen instrument, to bear My name before the nations and kings and the people of Israel; for I will show him how great things he must suffer for My name's sake."

Forthwith Ananias went, and entering into the house of Judas, he laid his hand upon Saul, and said, "Saul, my brother, that same Lord Jesus, who appeared unto thee as thou camest hither, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Spirit." At that touch, it seemed that scales fell from Saul's eyes; immediately his sight was restored, and he was baptised. Then for a time he dwelt with the disciples who were at Damascus; and at once he began to preach in the synagogues that Christ is the Son of God. All who heard him were astonished, saying, "Is not this the man who destroyed all those that called on the name of Jesus in Jerusalem, and who came hither for the same purpose?" But so much the more Saul grew in confidence, and out-reasoned the Jews of Damascus, proving to them that Jesus is the Christ.

At last the Jews laid a plot to slay him, and watched the gates of the city day and night with that intent; but their plot was discovered, and the disciples let him down from the city wall by night in a basket, and so he escaped. Returning to Jerusalem, he sought to join himself to the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, not believing him to be a disciple. Then came Barnabas, a Levite of Cyprus, a man held in good repute of all the church, and brought him to the Apostles, telling them how the Lord had appeared unto him in the way, and with what boldness he had preached the gospel at Damascus. So Saul was received into the fellowship of the church of Jerusalem, and spake boldly in the name of Jesus, disputing with the Grecian Jews. And when these also plotted to slay him, the brethren sent him away for safety to Tarsus, his native city. And for a season the church had rest throughout all Palestine, and the number of those who believed increased greatly.

(7) "TO THE GENTILES ALSO"

IN these days, Peter, who had been travelling through all the land, came to Lydda, and there he healed a man named Æneas who for eight years had been a paralytic; and all the folk of Lydda and Saron believed when they saw that sign. Not far from Lydda was Joppa, by the seaside, and among the disciples in Joppa there was a good woman named Tabitha, or as the Greeks called her, "Dorcas," "the Gazelle." Her whole life was spent in acts of kindness and charity to the poor and needy. Now while Peter was at Lydda, Tabitha fell sick and died; and her friends sent two messengers to Peter desiring him to come to them without delay. When he was come, they took him into the upper room where Tabitha lay; and around her were gathered all the poor widows whom she had befriended in her lifetime, weeping, and shewing the garments which she had made for them. Peter bade them all go forth from the room, and, kneeling down beside the bed where the dead woman lay, he prayed to the Lord; then, turning, he said, "Tabitha, arise!" At that word she opened her eyes, and, seeing Peter, she sat up; and Peter called in her friends and the widows, and presented her to them. The fame of this thing was noised abroad through all the town, so that many believed. Then for a time Peter dwelt in Joppa, lodging by the seaside in the house of Simon the Tanner.

Now in the city of Cæsarea there dwelt a Roman of the great Cornelian family, a centurion of the Italian cohort. A godly man he was, and devout, generous in his gifts to the poor, and constant in prayer to God. It befell that as he was praying on a certain afternoon in his house, he saw a vision of an angel, who called to him, "Cornelius." Awe-stricken, he answered, "What is it, Lord?" "Thy prayers and thy gifts," said the angel, "have not been forgotten of God. Send men to Joppa unto Simon, who is called Peter. He dwelleth with Simon the Tanner, by the seaside; and he shall tell thee what thou must do." The vision vanished, and

Cornelius called to him two of his household servants, and a godly soldier of his company, and sent them to Joppa.

About noon on the next day, as they were drawing near to the end of their journey, and the blue waters of the Great Sea sparkled before them, Peter got him up to the house-top to pray in quietness. After a time he grew hungry and would have eaten; but while food was making ready, he fell into a trance, and in the trance he dreamed, and this was the manner of his dream. It seemed to him that the heavens over his head were opened, and a great sheet, gathered up at the four corners, was let down to the earth. It was full of all manner of four-footed beasts, and creeping things, and birds of the air. Then there came a voice to him, "Rise, Peter; kill and eat." "Nay, Lord," answered Peter, "for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean." Once more the voice spake, "What God hath made clean, that call not thou common." Three times this was repeated, and thereafter the sheet was drawn up again into the sky.

Peter sat wondering what the meaning of this vision might be; and while he mused the three messengers from Cæsarea had found the house, and were standing below at the door asking if he lodged there. "Behold," said the Spirit to him, "three men are seeking thee. Get thee down and go with them, questioning nothing; for I have sent them." Peter went down to greet the men, and when they had told him their errand, he took them in, and gave them lodging for the night; and on the next day he journeyed with them to Cæsarea, together with some of the brethren from Joppa.

When they arrived, a day later, they found that Cornelius had gathered his kinsmen and friends together and was awaiting their coming. He came to meet Peter, as he entered, and bowing down at his feet, he made obeisance; but Peter raised him up, saying—"Stand up; for I am but a man, as thou." So they went into the house to the company that was assembled. Then said Peter—"Ye know that it is not lawful for a Jew to keep company with Gentiles; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean. Therefore am I come, as soon as ye sent for me; tell me now for what purpose ye have called me." Therewith

Cornelius rehearsed to him all that had happened, and "Thou hast done well," he said, "in coming to us; and now we are all here present to hearken to whatsoever thou art commanded of God to tell us."

"Truly," said Peter, "I see that God is no respecter of persons. In every nation the man that feareth God and doeth righteousness is accepted of him." So saying, he expounded to them the Gospel of Jesus Christ; and while he was yet speaking, lo! the Holy Spirit descended upon those who heard. Thereat the believers who were with Peter were astonished, hearing these Gentiles speaking with tongues and praising God; and Peter said, "Can any man forbid baptism to these men, who have received the Holy Spirit no less than we?" So he commanded that they should be baptised in the name of Jesus.

But when the brethren in Jerusalem heard what was done, they were ill pleased with Peter, reproaching him because that he had held fellowship with heathen men. Peter therefore recounted in their hearing all that had happened, and how the Holy Spirit had fallen upon Cornelius and his friends at the preaching of the Word. "Seeing then," said he, "that God gave to them the same gift as to us, what was I, that I could withstand God?" Then their objections were silenced, and they praised God, saying, "Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life." And this was the beginning of the ingathering of the nations to the fold of Jesus Christ.

(8) THROUGH THE IRON GATE

THE persecution which followed the death of Stephen had scattered the disciples far and wide; and some of them travelled to Phenice, and Cyprus, the great island of the sea, and to Antioch, preaching the gospel to Jews only. Many of the men of Antioch believed, and when the Apostles in Jerusalem heard of this, they sent out Barnabas, who came to Antioch, and confirmed the converts in their faith. When he saw the great-

ness of the work, he minded him of Saul of Tarsus, and seeking him out, he brought him to Antioch, and there for a whole year they two taught and preached, so that the church was greatly increased. And it was in Antioch that the disciples were first called Christians. Then there came a great famine upon the world in the days of the Emperor Claudius; and the disciples at Antioch sent succour to the brethren in Judea by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

In these days the evil King Herod Agrippa, grandson of him who slew the babes of Bethlehem, began to persecute the church. James, the brother of John, he slew with the sword; and when he saw that the Jews were pleased, he cast Peter into prison also, meaning to slay him so soon as the Feast of the Passover should be over. So Peter lay in ward, awaiting death, while the whole church of Christ prayed continually to God for him.

It was the last night of the Passover Feast, and Peter slept in prison under strict watch. Four guards of four soldiers each were told off to take their turns in keeping him, and he lay between two soldiers, bound with two chains, while the doors without were guarded by sentinels. Then came the angel of the Lord, and at his coming a great light shone in the prison. He touched the sleeping Apostle, and bade him arise quickly; and therewith his chains fell from his hands and feet; then said the angel, "Gird thyself and fasten thy sandals," and, when Peter had so done,—"Wrap thyself in thy cloak, and follow me." Like a man in a dream Peter followed his guide. They passed the inner ward, and the outer, and came to the great iron gate of the prison which led to the city street. Silently, as if moved by unseen hands, it opened before them; and passing through, the angel led Peter along one street. Then he vanished, and the Apostle was left alone.

When he had gathered his bewildered senses, he said to himself, "Now I know that indeed God hath sent His angel, and delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from the evil desire of the Jews." Pondering it in his mind, he came to the house of Mary, the mother of that disciple who was called John Mark, where many of the brethren were gathered that night to pray for him. At Mary's door he knocked, and a maid of the household

named Rhoda came to ask who was there. At once she knew Peter's voice, and forgetting even to open the door in the gladness of her heart, she left Peter standing without, and came running to tell the company. "Thou art mad," they said to her; and when she maintained that Peter was there, they said, "It is his spirit." But Peter kept on knocking, and at last they opened the door, and, seeing him, were amazed. But he lifted his hand and commanded silence, and told them how the Lord had saved him. "Go," he said, "tell these things to James and to the brethren." So he left them, and went to another place.

Great was the dismay among the soldiers in the morning when they found that Peter was gone. Herod sought in vain for him, and in his rage he gave command that the guards should all be put to death.

His own death day was not far distant. He had gone to Cæsarea to dwell; and while he was there an embassy came from the people of Tyre and Sidon entreating his favour; for he had been greatly angered against them. Herod set a day for giving them audience; and when they were gathered he came forth in a wonderful royal robe of silver tissue, and sitting upon the throne, made an oration unto them. When they heard his voice, and saw him flashing in all his splendour, they shouted, "The voice of a god, not of a man!" In that moment God's vengeance fell upon him for his pride. He was stricken down with a deadly and loathsome disease, so that all his flesh became corrupt; and he died. But the word of God, which he had thought to quench in blood, grew and increased.

Part VI. *The Story of the Early Church—Abroad*

(1) THE FIRST MISSIONARIES

THEIR errand of mercy at Jerusalem over, Barnabas and Saul returned to Antioch. There God's Spirit bade the church set these two apart for a special service. They were to go to bear the gospel to the nations. So, after prayer and fasting, the brethren sent them on their journey. From Seleucia, the port of Antioch, they set sail, and came to Salamis in the island of Cyprus, where they preached to their own countrymen in the synagogue. Thence they travelled westwards through the island, in company with John Mark, who served them, until they came to Paphos, where was the seat of the worship of the false goddess Aphrodite, whom the Romans call Venus. At Paphos, the Roman governor, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man, hearkened to them, and believed; and when one of the hangers-on of his court, a Jewish magician named Elymas, sought to turn him away from the faith, Saul (who henceforth is called Paul) cast on him a mist and a darkness, so that he went about groping, and seeking some one to lead him by the hand.

From Paphos they took ship, and sailed northwards to Perga in Pamphylia; but there the heart of John Mark failed him, and parting from them, he returned to Jerusalem. Barnabas and Paul struck inland over the wild Taurus Mountains, through dizzy robber-haunted passes, until they came to the Pisidian Antioch. There, as they were wont, they preached the gospel first in the synagogue of their own nation, and many of the Jews, and of the heathen who had received the Jewish faith, hearkened to them; and the Gentiles, above all, were eager to hear their message once more on the next Sabbath. So that day there was a great assembly, for almost the whole city was gathered to hear the word. The very sight of these heathen multitudes raised the jealousy of the

PETER'S DELIVERANCE.
(Acts, xii, 7–10.)

Jews, and they raged against Paul and Barnabas, contradicting them and blaspheming. Sadly the two turned from their own people. "It was needful," they said, "that the word should first be spoken to you; but seeing ye put it from you, and deem yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles."

At that saying, the heathen folk were glad, and received the word with joy. But the Jews stirred up the anger of the chief women, and the heads of the city, and persuaded them to drive out Paul and Barnabas, who shook off the dust of their feet as a witness against them, and journeyed on to Iconium.

There, too, it was but a repetition of what had befallen them at Antioch. For when many of the Jews and of the Greeks believed, the rest of the Jews raised strife and tumult in the town, and gathered a mob to stone the preachers. And so, learning of their ill intent, Paul and Barnabas fared onwards to the town of Lystra, in the wild land of Lycaonia, and preached the gospel there. Now at Lystra there was a certain man, lame from his birth, who heard Paul speak. Paul looked earnestly upon him, and seeing his faith, cried with a loud voice to him, "Stand upon thy feet," and therewith the man leaped up and walked.

When the men of the city saw that wonder, they shouted in their rough Lycaonian speech, "The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men!" Barnabas, for his dignity, they named Jupiter, and Paul, for his quick eloquence, they would have to be Mercury.

The priest of Jupiter, whose temple stood before the city gate, brought oxen, wreathed with flowers, and made ready to sacrifice them in honour of those heavenly visitants. Paul and Barnabas were horror-stricken. Rending their clothes, they rushed in among the eager worshippers, crying, "Friends, why do ye such things? We are men, like yourselves, and we are come to turn you from all these vanities to the true God, who made heaven and earth and all things, and who, though He suffered the nations to walk in their own ways, yet never left Himself without witness, for

"Rain from heaven and fruitful seasons He gave you,
Filling your hearts with food and gladness."

Yet, with all their pleading, they were scarce able to hold back the people from doing sacrifice to them.

Ere long the tide turned, and ran as strong in the other direction, for certain Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and gained over the simple country folk, so that they rose against the Apostles, and, having stoned Paul, dragged him out of the city, believing him to be dead. But while the brethren stood sadly round about him as he lay, he rose up and returned with them to the city. On the next day he and Barnabas left Lystra, and came to Derbe; and, having preached the gospel there, they returned to Lystra and Iconium and Antioch, confirming in the faith those who had believed, and appointing elders in every church. Then, passing through Pisidia, and preaching in Perga, they came to Attaleia, and thence took shipping to the Syrian Antioch from which they had set out. And on their return they gathered the brethren together, and recounted to them all that God had wrought by them, and how He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.

(2) THE FIRST CHURCH COUNCIL

ERE long difficulties began to arise in the new Gentile churches; for certain Jewish brethren came from Judea and began to stir up strife, saying that no man could be saved unless he were circumcised and kept the Law of Moses. Paul and Barnabas argued the matter with them; but dissension and doubt still prevailed, so that at last it was determined that those two should go up to Jerusalem and consult the Apostles about this question. They therefore set out, and made their way through Phenice and Samaria, telling, wherever they went, of the conversion of the Gentiles, so that the whole church rejoiced with them. And, coming to Jerusalem, they were received by the Apostles and elders, and recounted all that God had done by them; but certain of the Pharisees which believed still maintained that it was needful to circumcise the Gentile converts, and oblige them to keep the Law of Moses.

The Apostles and elders therefore came together in council to consider this matter, and, after long discussion, Peter rose up, and recalled how he had been taught to open the door of faith to the Gentiles, and gave counsel that it was not fitting that the Jewish Christians should lay upon the necks of their Gentile brethren a yoke which they themselves had never been able to bear. Then the discussion ceased for a while, and Paul and Barnabas recounted what great things God had wrought among the Gentiles. When they had made an end of speaking, there rose up a man greatly reverenced among them, James, the Lord's brother, who was of all strict Jews the strictest, and gave it as his judgment that it was not right to trouble the Gentiles which had turned to the faith with all the restrictions of the Law of Moses. "Let us only write unto them," he said, "that they keep themselves from the pollution of idolatry, and from impurity, and from things strangled, and from blood."

To his judgment the council agreed; and they chose two of the chief men among them, Judas, called Barsabas, and Silas, to go back to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. And with them they sent a letter to the church, commending the work of Paul and Barnabas, and settling the question of obedience to the Law of Moses in accordance with the word of James. "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us," so ran the conclusion of the judgment of this first of church councils, "to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; that ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from impurity; from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well."

This letter therefore was read before the whole church at Antioch, and there was great gladness among the believers because of the comfort which it brought. And of the deputies who had come with Paul and Barnabas from Jerusalem, Silas chose to abide in Antioch, and afterwards became Paul's faithful comrade in the preaching of the gospel among the nations.

(3) THE GOSPEL DAWNS ON EUROPE

NOW when many days were past, Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us go and visit our brethren in those cities where we preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do;" and Barnabas was of the same mind. But there arose a strife between them at their setting out; for Barnabas wished to take with him his kinsman John Mark, but Paul thought it not good to take one who had deserted them before. So sharp was the dispute between them that they parted from one another. Barnabas took Mark as his companion, and sailed for Cyprus; while Paul chose Silas, who came with them from Jerusalem, and went through Syria and Cilicia. Coming through Derbe to Lystra where he had been worshipped as a god, he added there to his company the young disciple Timothy, whose father was a Greek, but his mother, Eunice, a Jewess.

Together the little party journeyed through Phrygia and Galatia; but they were forbidden of God's Spirit to enter into the province of Asia, or into Bithynia. So at length they came down to the sea-shore at Troas, whence they could see the coasts of Europe beyond the blue Ægean; and at Troas Paul was joined by one who was to be his friend and helper in the after days, and to write the story of his voyagings, Luke, "the beloved physician."

At Troas Paul was called to the great task of his later days. For in the night there appeared to him in a vision a man of Macedonia, saying, "Come over into Macedonia, and help us." Judging therefore that the Lord had sent the vision to guide him, he and his company forthwith endeavoured to go across into Europe. Sailing from Troas, they made a straight run to Samothrace, and the next day to Neapolis; and thence they came to Philippi, the chief city of that district of Macedonia, and a Roman colony; and in Philippi they abode for a season.

There was no synagogue in Philippi; but outside of the city by the river-side there was a place where the Jews, and chiefly the

PAUL AND BARNABAS AT LYSTRA.

Jewish women, were wont to come for prayer. Thither Paul came and spake to the women, and one of them, Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth, from the town of Thyatira, opened her heart to the things which he uttered. Ere long she and her household were baptised, and she welcomed Paul and his companions to her home, saying, "If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there."

Now there was in Philippi a slave-girl possessed of a divining spirit who brought much gain to her masters by fortune-telling. As Paul and his companions went to the place of prayer, this girl followed them, day after day, crying, "These men are the servants of God most high, who shew unto us the way of salvation." At length Paul, being grieved at her miserable state, turned and adjured the spirit within her, saying, "In the name of Jesus Christ I command thee to come out of her;" and forthwith the spirit came out. But the owners of the girl, seeing that they had lost the hope of the gain that she was wont to bring them, laid hands on Paul and Silas, and dragged them before the rulers, charging them with disturbing the city and teaching customs which were unlawful for Romans to observe.

Thereat the multitude rose up against them, and the rulers rent off their clothes, and commanded them to be scourged. When they had been cruelly beaten, they were cast into prison, and the jailor was charged to keep them safely. So he thrust them into the inner ward of the prison, and fixed their feet in the stocks.

At midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing praises, so that all in the prison heard them, when of a sudden the earth trembled, so that all the doors of the prison flew open, and the chains fell from the prisoners' hands and feet. The chief jailor waked from sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, drew his sword, and would have slain himself, imagining that his prisoners had escaped, but Paul shouted to him, "Harm not thyself, for we are all here." Then he called for lights, and came in trembling, and fell on his knees before Paul and Silas crying, "My masters, what must I do to be saved?" Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," they said, "and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." Then they preached to him and his the gospel of Jesus. That very hour he

took them, and bathed their bruises, and set food before them; and he and all his household were baptised.

Next morning came officers from the magistrates, with a message to the chief jailor—"Let those men go." He came to Paul and said, "The magistrates have sent to let you go; depart therefore in peace." But Paul answered, "They have scourged us without trial, us who are Roman citizens, and have cast us into prison; and now would they thrust us out by stealth? No, indeed; let them come themselves and fetch us out." The magistrates were terrified when they heard that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens; they came and implored them to go out quietly and say no more of the matter. So they came out of the prison, and went to the house of Lydia; and, having seen and comforted the brethren, they departed from Philippi.

Passing through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where the Jews had a synagogue; and there Paul, according to his custom, pleaded with his countrymen to accept Jesus Christ. Some of them believed, and also a great number of the Greek proselytes and the leading women of the place. But the rest of the Jews gathered a company of the scum of the city, and made a riot, accusing the Christians of disturbing the peace of the town. The brethren therefore, for safety's sake, sent Paul and Silas away to Berea, where they found a people more open-minded, who received the gospel with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures for confirmation of the word that was spoken to them. But the Thessalonian Jews would not suffer the work to go on peaceably, but came to Berea also, and stirred up strife. So Paul had to be sent away to the sea-coast, though Silas and Timothy remained awhile in Berea. And when those who guided Paul had brought him to Athens, he sent word back with them to Berea that Silas and Timothy should come at once to him.

(4) ATHENS, THE EYE OF GREECE

IN the great and famous city of Athens, most beautiful and renowned of all the cities of Greece, Paul waited for his comrades. As he walked the streets, his heart was sore to see a city so utterly given over to idolatry, for Athens was full of images of the gods, from the rude Hermæ which stood before the house-doors, to the great statue of Athene the Champion which towered aloft upon the Acropolis. Daily in the synagogues and in the market-place he debated with the Jews, and with the teachers of the different schools of philosophy; and at last some of the leaders of the school of Epicurus, and of the Stoics, half in scorn, and half in curiosity as to his teaching of Jesus and the Resurrection, brought him to the ancient court at the Areopagus, and invited him to expound his doctrine to them. "Thou bringest strange things to our ears," they said; "we would know therefore what these things mean." Many gathered around on the old stone benches on the hillside to hear the discussion, for of all men the Athenian is the most inquisitive, and loves to spend his time either in hearing or telling something new.

So Paul stood forth before them, and said, "Men of Athens, I see that in all things ye are very devout. For as I passed through your city and observed your worship, I saw an altar bearing this inscription, 'To an unknown God.' That God whom ye worship without knowing Him, I preach unto you. God Who made the world, and all that therein is, the Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples of man's building, nor is worshipped with men's hands, as though He stood in need of aught. To all He giveth life, and breath, and all things, and hath made all nations of one blood to dwell on the earth, appointing to them their destiny, and the bounds of their abode, that they should seek the Lord, if by groping after Him they may find Him; though indeed He is not far from any one of us. For in Him we live and move and have our

being. Have not some of your own poets said, 'For we also are His offspring?'

"Seeing, then, that we are the children of God, we ought not to fancy that the Divinity is like to gold or silver or stone fashioned by art and skill of man. In days bygone, God overlooked this ignorance; but now He biddeth all men repent; for He hath appointed a day to judge the world by that man whom He hath chosen, of which He hath given proof to all men, seeing that He hath raised him from the dead."

At that word of rising from the dead, some jeered, while others said, "Another time will do to hear about that." So Paul went out from among them. Yet even in Athens there were some who joined themselves to him, and believed; among them one Dionysius, of the council of the Areopagus, and a woman named Damaris, and certain others.

(5) CORINTH, THE CITY OF PLEASURE

FROM his disappointment at Athens, Paul turned to the city of Corinth, famed over all the world for luxury, and pleasure, and vice, standing on its Isthmus betwixt the Corinthian Gulf and the Saronic, the meeting-place of all the merchants and pleasure-seekers and idlers of the East. There he fell in with a Jew of Pontus, named Aquila, who had been driven with his wife Priscilla out of Rome by a decree of the Emperor Claudius against the Jews. Their trade was tent-making, which Paul also had learned in his youth; so he dwelt with them, and wrought at their craft during the week, while on the Sabbath he preached Jesus to the Jews and the Greek proselytes in the synagogue.

When Silas and Timothy joined him from Macedonia, he became ever more eager in his work, and finding that the Jews would have none of his message, he shook his robe, as a testimony against them, and said, "Your blood be upon your own heads; I am

clean of it; henceforth I go unto the Gentiles." So he dwelt with a worshipper of God named Justus, whose house was next to the synagogue, and under his preaching, Crispus the chief of the synagogue, and many of the citizens of Corinth believed and were baptised. Moreover the Lord spake to Paul in a vision of the night, and said, "Fear not, but speak out boldly; for I am with thee, and none shall harm thee; for I have many people in this city." So for eighteen months he remained there, teaching the word of God.

The Jews were greatly angered at his success, and when a new proconsul, one Gallio, came from Rome, they brought a charge against Paul, and haled him before the court, saying, "This man persuadeth men to worship God in a fashion that is not lawful." But ere Paul could begin his defence, Gallio answered them, "If it were a matter of wrong, or of wickedness, O ye Jews, it were only right that I should hear you; but if it be a question of words and names and of your own law, see to it yourselves; for I will be no judge of such matters." And so saying, he bade his lictors clear the court. When the Greeks heard that judgment, they laid hands on Sosthenes, who was chief of the synagogue since the baptism of Crispus, and beat him in open court; but Gallio paid no heed to what they did.

After this failure of his enemies' malice, Paul remained in Corinth for a season, and then took ship into Syria, taking with him Aquila and Priscilla; and coming to Ephesus, the Jews there would fain have had him abide with them, but he refused, because he was minded to go up to Jerusalem for the Passover Feast. So, having promised to return to them, he set sail for Cæsarea, and thence went to Jerusalem and greeted the church there, returning thereafter to Antioch, and visiting the churches in Galatia and Phrygia.

Meanwhile in Ephesus the work was carried on by a Jew named Apollos, a man of Alexandria, of eloquent speech and great knowledge of the Scriptures. As yet he knew only of the message of John the Baptist; but when Aquila and Priscilla heard his teaching, they joined themselves to him, and taught him the truth more perfectly. And after a while he set out for Greece, being

recommended by the brethren to the disciples there; and coming to Corinth, he greatly helped the cause of the believers, convincing the Jews, out of their own Scriptures, that Jesus is the Christ.

(6) EPHESUS, THE CITY OF THE LADY OF LIFE

HEN he had journeyed through the upper districts of Asia Minor, Paul came back, as he had promised, to Ephesus. Now Ephesus was a great city, and famed through all the world for the temple of the goddess Artemis, whom the Romans call Diana. For in the temple there stood an image of the goddess, graven from a meteoric stone, that had fallen from the sky; and all men held this image to be most holy, and worshipped Diana as the Lady who giveth life unto all creatures.

At Ephesus Paul took up the work which Apollos had begun, and baptised in the name of Jesus those whom Apollos had only baptised with John's baptism. Then for three months he taught in the synagogue; but finding that many opposed the truth, and were hardened in unbelief, he separated the believers from the synagogue, and found them a meeting-place in the school of a teacher named Tyrannus. For two years his work continued in the city; and the greatness of the town, and its constant stream of pilgrims and merchants coming and going, caused the report of the truth to spread far and wide both among Jews and Greeks. Moreover God wrought special wonders by the hands of Paul, so that many sick folk were healed by him, insomuch that some of the wandering Jews who set up to be wizards were wont to use the name of Jesus and of Paul in their incantations. There were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, who adjured an evil spirit in this fashion, saying "We adjure thee by Jesus, whom Paul preacheth." Then the man possessed by the evil spirit answered, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?" And with that he leapt upon them, and overcame them, stripping their cloaks from them, and driving them out of the house, bruised and wounded.

So greatly did the truth prevail in the city that many of those

who were wont to practise the art magic brought their books of wizardry, and piled them in a great heap before all men, and burned them; and when the price of them was reckoned it was found to be fifty thousand pieces of silver.

But this was not to the mind of many in the city; and especially of the craftsmen who were wont to make silver images of the Lady Diana for sale to the pilgrims who came to the temple. One of these silversmiths named Demetrius gathered his fellow-craftsmen together. "My masters," he said, "ye know that by this craft of ours we make our wealth. And ye see that not only here in Ephesus, but throughout all the province this man Paul is persuading everybody that these be no gods which are made with hands. And thus not only is our trade in danger of coming to an end; but the temple of the great goddess Diana will be despised, and her splendour, whom all Asia and the whole world worshippeth, shall be destroyed." At that they were filled with rage, and a shout went up, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians."

The tumult spread through the whole city. The crowd laid hands on two of Paul's friends from Macedonia, Gaius and Aristarchus, and hurried them into the theatre. Paul would fain have faced the mob; but the disciples held him back, and indeed some of the Asiarchs who ruled over the town, sent him a friendly message that he should not risk himself in the theatre. So in the great building the mob seethed and shouted, some crying one thing, and some another; for most of them knew not why they had come together. After a while one Alexander stood forth before them, being put forward by the Jews; and lifting his hand, he would have spoken; but as soon as they saw him to be a Jew, the whole crowd howled, for two hours together, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!"

At last the secretary of the city rulers, a prudent man, gained a hearing. "Men of Ephesus," he said, "do not all men know that our city is temple warden of the great goddess Diana, and of the image which fell down from Jupiter? These things no man can deny; and therefore ye ought to be quiet and to do nothing hastily. Ye have dragged here these men, who are neither robbers of churches, nor blasphemers of your goddess; how will ye answer

for it? If Demetrius and those of his craft wish to lay a charge, the courts are open, and there are proconsuls; let the charge be made and answered. If any other matter needs looking into let it be done in a meeting duly summoned. For we run the risk of being called to account for this day's uproar, seeing that we can give no reason for this concourse." So saying, he dismissed the assembly.

(7) PAUL AT JERUSALEM

FTER the tumult of the Ephesian craftsmen, Paul was minded to go forth and visit again the churches in Macedonia and Greece. So he journeyed through Macedonia, and coming unto Greece abode there three months, and being warned that the Jews laid wait to slay him at his sailing from Greece into Syria, he turned back through Macedonia, and sailed from Philippi to Troas. There upon the first day of the week the brethren came together to keep their Lord's memorial feast, and Paul, knowing that he must leave them on the morrow, spake long and eagerly to them, even until midnight. They were gathered in an upper chamber, with many lamps burning, and between the heat and the lateness of the hour, one of the company, a young man named Eutychus, who sat on one of the window-ledges, fell into a deep sleep, and overbalancing, fell down into the courtyard from the third storey, and was taken up dead. Then Paul ran down to the courtyard, and taking the young man in his arms, said, "Vex not yourselves, for his spirit is in him." And returning to the company he continued his speech with them until the break of day; and ere he departed they brought Eutychus alive, and were greatly comforted.

Meanwhile Luke, with the rest of Paul's comrades, went by sea to Assos there to await Paul, who purposed to make the journey afoot. Meeting him at Assos, they took him aboard, and sailed through the Greek islands, by Mitylene and Chios, Samos and Trogyllium, to Miletus; and there Paul summoned the elders of the Ephesian church to meet him, because time was lacking to

him to go up to Ephesus, for he was hastening to be at Jerusalem by the day of Pentecost. When they were come he spake very tenderly and solemnly to them, recalling the burden of his teaching and his manner of life among them. "And now," said he, as he brought his speaking to an end, "I go, constrained in spirit, unto Jerusalem, knowing nothing of what shall happen to me there, save that wherever I go the Spirit warns me that chains and imprisonment await me. But none of these things disturb me, nor do I prize my life, if so be that I may finish my race with joy, and the service which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to bear witness to the gospel of the grace of God. Behold, now, I know that ye all, amongst whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more; therefore I take you to witness that I am pure from the blood of all men; for I have never hesitated to declare to you the whole counsel of God."

When he had made an end of speaking, he kneeled down and prayed with them all. And they wept bitterly, and embraced him, and kissed him, sorrowing most of all for those words which he spake, that they would see his face no more. Thus they accompanied him to the ship.

From Miletus Paul and his companions sailed to Coös, and thence to Rhodes and Patara; and at Patara they found a ship bound for Tyre, and took passage in her. At Tyre they tarried seven days with the disciples there, some of whom, warned by the Spirit, would fain have dissuaded Paul from going to Jerusalem. Bidding farewell on the beach to their Tyrian friends, they sailed to Ptolemais, and journeyed thence to Cæsarea; and at Cæsarea they lodged with Philip the Evangelist; the same who had been a fellow-deacon with Stephen the first martyr. While they dwelt there, a certain prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. This man took Paul's girdle, and bound therewith his own hands and feet, saying, "Thus saith the Holy Spirit, so shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles." Then both Paul's companions and the brethren at Cæsarea pled with him not to go up to Jerusalem; but he answered, "What mean ye, weeping thus, and breaking my heart? I am ready, not only to be bound, but

even to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." "And thereat," says Luke, "seeing he could not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, 'The will of the Lord be done.'"

The brethren at Jerusalem received him with gladness, and heard eagerly all that he had to tell them of God's work among the Gentiles. It was the Feast of Pentecost, and there were gathered in Jerusalem Jews from all parts of Asia, many of them men who had striven with Paul on his journeys, and knew him well, and hated him bitterly. These men, when they saw him in the Temple, made a great outcry, and laid hands on him, crying, "Men of Israel, help; this is the man that teacheth all men everywhere against the law and this place; and, lo, he hath brought in Greeks unto the Temple, and defiled this holy place."

Then all the city was in an uproar; they dragged Paul out of the Temple, and shut the gates lest the sanctuary should be polluted with his blood. But when they were about to slay him, Lysias, the captain of the garrison in the Tower of Antonia, which overlooked the Temple court, was ware of the tumult, and, calling centurions and soldiers, he hastened down among them. When the mob saw the tribune and the mailed Roman soldiers, they ceased beating of Paul; and Lysias commanded Paul to be bound with two chains, demanding to know who he was, and what he had done. In the crowd some cried one thing, and some another; and seeing that he could learn nothing clearly because of the tumult, the captain bade his men lead Paul into the castle.

On the stairway that led up to the tower, Paul turned to Lysias saying, "May I speak unto thee?" "Canst thou speak Greek?" said the captain. "Art not thou that Egyptian which before this made a riot and led out into the wilderness four thousand robbers?" "Nay," said Paul, "I am a Jew of Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city—suffer me, I pray thee, to speak to the people." Thereat the captain gave him leave, and Paul, standing on the stairs, raised his hand and began to speak in Hebrew. Hearing their own tongue, the mob fell silent, and Paul told them the story of his former hatred to the gospel of Jesus, and of his conversion, and how Ananias had brought to him the word of the Lord, bidding him preach the truth that he had persecuted. He told also

of his return to Jerusalem, "and," said he, "as I was praying in the Temple, I fell into a trance, and saw the Lord, who said unto me, 'Make haste and get thee out of Jerusalem; for they will not receive thy testimony concerning Me.' But I said, 'Lord, do they not know how I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue those that believed in Thee; and how I stood by, consenting to the death of Thy martyr Stephen, and holding the garments of them that slew him?' But the Lord said, 'Depart; for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles.'"

Thus far the crowd listened to him; but when he spake of the Gentiles their rage broke all bounds. They rent their clothes, and cast dust into the air, and shouted, "Away with such a fellow from the earth; for he is not fit to live." So the tribune ordered him to be brought unto the castle and beaten with rods, that he might learn why they cried thus against him. The lictors began to bind him with thongs; but Paul said, "Is it lawful for you to beat a man who is a Roman, and uncondemned?" At that word the centurion who was over the guard went to the tribune, and said, "Take heed what thou doest; for this man is a Roman citizen." Then Lysias came and said to him, "Tell me, art thou a Roman?" "Yea," said Paul. The tribune, hesitating, said, "No small sum it cost me to gain my citizenship." "But I," said Paul, "was freeborn." When he heard that, the tribune was afraid, for that he had bound a Roman citizen without trial. He loosed him therefore from his chains, and bade the chief priests and council appear before him, and brought Paul down, that his case might be heard.

Then Paul, looking steadfastly on the members of the council, said, "Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day." At that, Ananias the High Priest, bade smite him on the mouth. Indignant at the outrage, Paul cried, "God shall smite thee, thou whitened wall; sittest thou to judge me according to law, and yet commandest thou to smite me contrary to the law?" The men around him cried, "Revilest thou God's High Priest?" "Brethren," said Paul, "I knew not that he was the High Priest; for it is written, 'Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people!'"

As the discussion went on, Paul saw that his judges were not at one among themselves, for some were Sadducees, and some Pharisees. So he cried out in the council, "Brethren, I am a Pharisee, and the son of a Pharisee; and I am being called to account because of the hope and resurrection of the dead." Thereat there was a great dissension in the council, part taking the side of Paul, and part being against him, so that the tribune feared that he would be torn in pieces among them. Therefore he bade his soldiers bring him out by force and lodge him in the Tower of Antonia again.

That night the Lord appeared to Paul in a vision, saying, "Be of good cheer, Paul; for as thou hast witnessed for Me in Jerusalem, so shalt thou bear witness also at Rome." Then a number of the Jews bound themselves with an oath that they would neither eat nor drink until they had killed Paul. They laid a plot to have him brought down before the High Priest and the council for further examination, meaning to slay him on the way. But this plot became known to Paul's nephew, who brought word of it, and through him it was revealed to Lysias the tribune.

Lysias dismissed the young man, bidding him be silent about the matter. Then he summoned two of his centurions. "Make ready two hundred infantry," he said, "and seventy horsemen, and two hundred javelin-men to march this night to Cæsarea." So it was done, and that night Paul was hurried forth, thus guarded, to Antipatris. There the infantry left him and returned to Jerusalem, leaving the horsemen to guard him for the rest of the way; and so at last he was brought to the Roman governor Felix at Cæsarea. Lysias sent a letter with him, explaining the case; and when Felix had read it he said, "I will hear thee when thine accusers have come." So Paul was kept in ward in Herod's judgment hall against the coming of his enemies.

(8) BEFORE THE JUDGES

FIVE days later there came down Ananias the High Priest, and certain others, together with a hired pleader named Tertullus, who stated their case against Paul, charging him with stirring up sedition, and profaning the Temple, and laying also a bitter complaint against the tribune Lysias for his rescue of Paul. When Felix had heard Tertullus, he called upon Paul for his defence; and Paul made answer for himself. "It is but twelve days," he said, "since I came up to Jerusalem to worship; neither did my accusers find me disputing with any man, nor stirring up the people; nor can they prove their accusations against me. This I admit, that I worship the God of my fathers in a way which they call heresy, believing what is written in the law and the prophets, and hoping for a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust. I came but to bring alms and offerings to my people; and the Jews from Asia who have made all this mischief ought to have been here today to accuse me, if there were anything in their charge. In one point only may my conduct be challenged, in that I cried before the council, 'Touching the resurrection of the dead I am called in question of you this day.'"

When Felix had heard both sides, he deferred the further hearing of the case until Lysias the tribune should come down; and he committed Paul to the care of a centurion, giving orders that he should have liberty, and that his friends should have access to him. On one occasion the governor, with his wife Drusilla, a Jewess, sent for Paul, and heard him speak of the faith of Jesus. Indeed Felix was greatly disturbed as Paul spoke to him of righteousness and of the coming judgment; but he passed it off, saying, "Go thy way at present; when I have leisure I will call for thee." He would have had Paul buy his freedom with a bribe, and to that end he often held converse with him. But when two years had come and gone, Porcius Festus was made governor in place of

Felix, who left Paul still in captivity, because he hoped thus to please the Jews.

To the new governor the Jews made suit, asking that Paul should be sent up to Jerusalem to stand his trial there; for they hoped to slay him on the way. But Festus refused their petition, and bade them come to Cæsarea for the hearing of their cause. After he had heard the accusation and the defence, he said to Paul, "Art thou willing to go up to Jerusalem, and be tried there before me?" For he would fain have curried favour with the Jews, if it might be so. Then said Paul, "I stand at Cæsar's judgment-seat, and ought to be judged there. To the Jews I have done no wrong, as thou well knowest. If I have done aught worthy of death, I am ready to die; but if I am wrongly accused, no man has the right to hand me over to mine enemies. I appeal to Cæsar." Festus conferred with his advisers, and gave sentence. "To Cæsar thou hast appealed; to Cæsar thou shalt go."

Thereafter King Agrippa came to Cæsarea, with his sister Bernice, who was also the sister of Drusilla, the wife of Felix, to visit the governor. To him Festus made mention of the case of Paul. "We have a man here whom Felix left in bonds, and against whom the chief men of the Jews desired judgment. I answered them that it was not the Roman way to condemn any man until he had a fair trial. So I had him brought before me, and heard the accusation against him, which proved to be a matter of their own superstitions, and of one Jesus who had died, but whom this Paul affirmed to be alive. Being doubtful of such matters, I asked him if he would go to Jerusalem for trial; but when he appealed to the Emperor, I gave orders for him to be kept in ward until I can send him to Rome." Then said Agrippa, "I would fain hear this man myself." "Thou shalt hear him tomorrow," said Festus.

On the morrow came Agrippa and Bernice, with great splendour, and sat down in the judgment hall, with all the chief officials; and Festus, having ordered Paul to be brought before them, said, "King Agrippa, and all men here present, ye see this man against whom all the Jews clamour that he ought not to live. I have found nothing worthy of death in him, and he hath appealed to Cæsar, to whom I have resolved to send him. Now since I have

no clear case to state to the Emperor, I have brought him before you that the matter may be cleared up; for it seems to me unreasonable to send a prisoner for trial without a statement of the charges against him."

Then said Agrippa to Paul, "Thou hast leave to speak," and Paul made answer, "I hold myself fortunate, King Agrippa, in having to defend myself before thee, because I know thy knowledge of all the customs and questions of the Jews; wherefore I beseech thee to hear me patiently. All the Jews know how from my youth I lived among them a Pharisee of the strictest sect. Now I am accused because I hold to the hope of the promise made to the fathers, and cherished in all times by our twelve tribes. Why should it be thought a thing incredible that God should raise the dead?"

Thereupon Paul recited once more the story of how he had persecuted those who believed in Jesus, and how the Lord had appeared to him on the way to Damascus, and bidden him bear to all lands the gospel of His grace. "Whereupon, O King Agrippa," he said, "I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision; but shewed to them at Damascus, and in Judea, and then among the Gentiles, that they should repent, and turn to the Lord. For this reason the Jews caught me in the Temple, and would fain have killed me. But by God's help I still bear witness to all men of those things which were foretold by Moses and the prophets—that Christ should suffer, and should be the first to rise from the dead, and should give light to his people, and to the Gentiles."

At this Festus cried out, "Paul, thou art beside thyself—much study hath crazed thy brain." "Nay," answered Paul, "I am not mad, most noble Festus. The words which I speak are words of sober truth. Well doth the King know it, and therefore I speak freely to him. King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest."

But Agrippa made light of the matter. "With but little persuasion," he said mockingly, "thou wouldst fain make me a Christian." "Would to God," said Paul, "that whether with little persuasion or with much, not only thou, but also all that hear me this day were such as I am—except these chains."

With that the hearing was closed. The King and Bernice and the Governor talked of the matter in private, and said, "This man hath done nothing worthy of death or imprisonment."

"Indeed," said Agrippa to Festus, "this man might have been released, if he had not appealed to Cæsar."

(9) AN OLD-TIME VOYAGE AND SHIPWRECK

T length came the time when Paul must voyage to Rome to appear before Cæsar. To Julius, a centurion of the Augustan cohort, he was given in charge, together with other prisoners; and Luke went with him, and Aristarchus, a Macedonian from Thessalonica. They set sail in a ship of Adramyttium, and touched first at Sidon, where Julius courteously gave Paul freedom to meet with his friends. Thence they sailed under the lee of Cyprus, meeting with head-winds, till at last they reached the port of Myra in Lycia. At Myra, Julius found an Alexandrian corn ship, bound for Italy; and in her they embarked.

For many days they were delayed by baffling winds, and beating slowly past Cnidus, they ran southwards to get under the lee of the great island of Crete, and with much toil managed to round Salmone, and put into the port named Fair Haven. The season was now far advanced, and the autumn gales made sailing dangerous; wherefore Paul warned them that it was better to delay their voyage. But the pilot and the captain thought otherwise, and Fair Haven, despite its name, was no convenient port to winter in; for which reasons the centurion took the advice of the seamen rather than of Paul, and it was resolved to run for the harbour of Phœnix, and lay the ship up there for the winter. There came a gentle southerly breeze; and hoping that it would serve them, they weighed anchor, and coasted along the shores of the great island.

Ere long Paul's forebodings were justified. There burst upon them a fierce north-easter—Euroclydon—"The Wide-Surger"

PAUL'S SHIPWRECK.

as mariners call it. Vainly the sailors sought to beat up against the blast. There was nothing for it but to run before the wind, and, even so, it was with much ado that they could get their boat aboard under the lee of the little island named Cauda. Moreover the seams of the ship began to open, as she laboured in the mighty seas, so that they were fain to frap her from stem to stern with a cable, lest she should go to pieces. Dreading lest they should be driven upon the Great Syrtis—the quicksand on the northern African coast,—they cast out a sea-anchor, and were driven helplessly onwards.

As the vessel laboured more and more, they jettisoned part of the cargo, and the next day the spare gear had to go. Day after day the tempest howled about them, and the sky was black with clouds, so that neither sun nor stars could be seen, and all hope of safety died away.

When all on board were faint with cold and hunger, Paul stood forth and said, "My masters, ye should have listened to me, and not have weighed from Crete to run into this danger. But now I bid you pluck up heart; for there shall be no loss of life, but only of the ship. This night there stood by me the angel of the God Whose I am, and Whom I serve, saying, 'Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Cæsar; and, behold, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee.' Be of good cheer, therefore; for I believe God, that it shall be as He hath told me. Nevertheless, we must be cast upon a certain island."

For fourteen days and nights they were driven by the tempest; but about midnight on the fourteenth night, the seamen on the lookout imagined that they drew near to land. Sounding, they got twenty fathoms, and a little later fifteen fathoms; whereupon, in dread of being driven headlong upon rocks, they cast four anchors out of the stern, and wished for the day. The seamen lowered the boat, pretending that they meant to get out an anchor from the bow, but meaning to save themselves and desert the ship; but Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, "Unless these remain in the ship, ye cannot be saved." So the soldiers cut the ropes, and let the boat go adrift.

As the morning began to break, Paul begged them all to eat,

for they were weak with long fasting; and once again he pledged his faith that none of them should come to harm. When they saw him eating, they took heart again and took some meat also. And thus they waited, two hundred and seventy-six souls in all, for the day. Daylight showed them an unknown coast; but they spied a certain creek with a beach, and deemed that they might run the ship ashore thereon. They cut their cables, let down the steering oars to keep control, and set the storm sail, and so made for the shore; and falling into a cross-tide, they beached the vessel. Her bows stuck fast in the sand, and her stern immediately began to break up under the fury of the waves.

The soldiers were minded to slay the prisoners, lest they should swim ashore and escape; but Julius, wishing to save Paul, forbade them, and ordered that all who could swim should spring into the sea and make for the land. Of the rest, some made rafts of boards and the ship's planking; and so, at last, all got safe to the shore.

When they had all reached safety, they found that the island was called Melita. "The rude islanders were kindly and hospitable," says Luke, "for they lit a fire on the beach, and welcomed us to it, for we were all shivering with the rain and the cold." Paul gathered a bundle of sticks to feed the fire, and as he cast them on the flames, a viper crawled from among them, and bit him on the hand. The islanders saw the venomous creature hang on his hand. "Surely," they said, "this is a murderer. He has escaped the sea, but the vengeance of the gods will not suffer him to live." But Paul shook off the reptile, and felt no harm. For a while the islanders watched him, expecting to see him swell, or fall down dead; but when they saw that he was sound and whole they changed their minds about him, "He must be a god," they said.

In the neighbourhood was a country house of the leading man of the island, whose name was Publius. "He made us welcome and lodged us courteously for three days," says Luke. "His father lay ill with a fever and hæmorrhage; and Paul laid his hands on him and prayed, and he was healed. Wherefore many others also in the island came, and were healed of their diseases; and when we departed they gave us great honour, and loaded us with all things that were needful for our journey."

(10) AT CÆSAR'S JUDGMENT-SEAT

THREE months Julius and his prisoners spent in the hospitable isle; then came the spring and the season for seafaring. An Alexandrian corn ship had wintered in one of the island harbours; she was the "Castor & Pollux," named from the twin gods whose stars shine high in the winter heavens. On this ship they embarked, and came first to Syracuse, the greatest of all the cities that the Greeks had planted overseas. There they stayed for three days, then passed by Rhegium, through the narrow strait that separates Italy from Sicily; and thence with a fair south wind they came in two days to Puteoli, that lies on the northern side of the bay of Naples, looking over to the great burning mountain Vesuvius.

At Puteoli, Julius gave Paul liberty to dwell for seven days with the disciples there; and after that he journeyed towards the great city that he had so longed to see. On the way his heart was cheered; for the brethren at Rome heard of his coming, and came forth to meet him as far as Appii Forum and the Three Taverns on the Appian Way. At length they passed the gates of Rome, and Julius handed over his prisoners to the commander of the Prætorian Guard; but liberty was given to Paul to dwell in his own lodging under guard. After three days' rest, he called the chief men of the Jewish colony in Rome together, and made known to them the reason for his presence there in captivity. "I have done no wrong," he said, "against our people; but when they accused me, I was forced to appeal to Cæsar. And I have desired to see you, that I may tell you that I am here in chains because of the hope of Israel."

A day was fixed for them to come and hear his statement; and he expounded the word of God, and showed them its witness to Jesus from morning till evening. Some believed what he said, and some would have none of it. So at last they departed, when he had spoken his last word to them in this wise—"Well spake

the Holy Spirit by Isaiah the prophet, saying, 'Go unto thy people, and say, "Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive." ' Be it known therefore unto you that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it."

For two long years Paul dwelt in Rome in his own hired house. No hindrance was put in the way of his teaching; and he preached the Kingdom of God with all confidence to those who came to him, so that many were turned to the faith.

At times some friend would come to him from over the seas, with news of one or other of the churches that were so dear to his heart; and when the messenger returned, Paul would give them a letter to take back with him to the church from which he came. From such of these letters as have survived the centuries, we learn a little of how the prisoner of Jesus Christ felt and thought. "I would ye should understand," so he writes to his friends at Philippi, best beloved of all the churches that he founded, "that the things which happened unto me have helped the gospel. My imprisonment for Christ's sake is known in Cæsar's court, and everywhere throughout the city, so that many of my brethren have taken courage to speak the Word boldly." Even in Nero's palace the gospel found converts, so that he can say to his Philippian friends—"All the saints send their greetings, especially those of Cæsar's household."

Beyond that, we know but little. It may be that he was brought before Cæsar's judgment-seat, and that there for the time the charge against him broke down, and he was released. Perchance he journeyed once more by land and sea over the old tracks, strengthening the faith of those to whom he had first brought the light; if so, it was not for long. The toils closed about him once more, and his last words come to us from Rome again, as he bids good-bye to Timothy his dearly beloved son. "I am now ready to be offered," he writes, "and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day."

He is lonely in Rome, he tells Timothy. His old friends are scattered to their different tasks, and one of them has left him for a baser reason. "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world." Only the faithful physician Luke is still with him; and, with a memory of the days when he had been too hasty in his judgment, he honours the man who had failed him at the beginning of his work. "Take Mark and bring him with thee; for he is useful to me for ministering." Time hangs heavy, and the nights are cold in the Roman winter, and mind and body both need comfort. So he bids Timothy do what he can to help. "The cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus, bring with thee when thou comest, and the books, but especially the parchments. Do thy diligence to come before winter."

Whether Timothy reached Rome in time to comfort the last days of his spiritual father, or how at last the end came, no man knows. Those were hard days for the Christians in Rome, when Nero was seeking a scapegoat whereon to cast the burden of his own follies and sins. In one way or another, whether by the executioner's sword on the Ostian Way, or by the jaws of the lions in the arena, Christ's faithful servant went home at last to the Master whom he had loved and followed so truly. Of such as he was it was written of old, "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever."

Part VII. *The Story of a Great Vision*

(1) HOW JOHN SAW HIS LORD ON PATMOS

OF the lives and works of the men whom Jesus called to be his Apostles, and to witness for him among the nations, many things have been written, but indeed little is certainly known. Only the disciple whom Jesus loved, and who leaned upon his breast at that Last Supper in the upper room at Jerusalem, has told us how once again he saw his Master. It fell out, he says, that he was an exile, for Christ's sake, in the little island of Patmos in the Ægean Sea, toiling as a slave in the mines. There came a Sabbath when he was communing in spirit with God, and of a sudden he heard behind him a voice, like the sound of a trumpet, saying, "I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last; and what thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven Asian churches."

Thereat John turned him about to see who it was that thus spake to him. Lo! before him stood seven golden lamps, and in the midst of them the figure of the Son of Man whom he had known of yore. He was clothed in a long garment and girt with a golden girdle; his head was white as snow, and his eyes bright and searching as a flame of fire; and his voice was as the sound of many waters. In his right hand, he held seven stars, and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword; and his countenance was dazzling as the noonday sun.

At that great sight John fell on his face, as one dead; but his Master laid his right hand upon him, saying, "Fear not; I am the First and the Last; I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of death and of the hidden world. Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter."

Then, as John hearkened, the Lord gave him his messages to the Asian churches, to Ephesus, and to Smyrna, to Pergamos, and to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea, warning, rebuking, and comforting, and giving to each some great promise for the men who should endure to the end, and overcome.

Thereafter there was disclosed to John the vision of the great strife that through all the ages is, and shall be, between the kingdom of righteousness and the kingdom of evil, and of all the tribulation and anguish through which at last the will of God Almighty shall be done.

And the end of the vision was this:

"I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the Book of Life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and the unseen world delivered up the dead which were in them; and they were judged every man according to his works."

(2) HOW JOHN SAW THE CITY OF GOD

WHEN that awful vision had passed, there came before the eyes of the seer a brighter picture, "I saw," he wrote, "a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away. And I, John, saw the Holy City, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, 'Behold, the Tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away.'"

Then came there an angel, and showed him all the glory of the city of God—"Her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal. Her wall was great and high, with twelve gates, and a great angel at each gate, and on the gates the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. The foundations of the city were adorned with all manner of precious stones; and the twelve gates were twelve pearls, each separate gate of a single pearl; and the street of the city was pure gold, clear as glass. And I saw no temple therein; for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof."

In that Holy City was to be naught but life, and peace, and unity. "He showed me a pure river of the Water of Life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street, on either side of the river, was there the Tree of Life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse; but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and His servants shall serve Him; and they shall see His face; and His name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light; and they shall reign for ever and ever."

This was the vision that the Lord Jesus sent to his servant to comfort him in the world of sin and weariness, nor has it ever quite grown dim before the eyes of men through all the ages since; but in their struggle towards light and peace they can still see on the far horizon the gleam of the Celestial City, and pray and hope that God's kingdom may come, and His will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.

7033
EVANGELICAL
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

DATE DUE

BS 550 .B254 1929
Baikie, James, 1866-1931.
The Bible story

UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

United Theological Seminary Library
MAIN BS550.B254 1929
Baikie, James The Bible story :
3 0645 0001 9978 2